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BY

ARCHIBALD RUTLEDGE

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DAYS OFF IN DIXIE



The scene was wonderful in its wild and fragrant beauty.

DAYS OFF IN DIXIE

BY
ARCHIBALD RUTLEDGE

LONDON
LEONARD PARSONS
1925

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TO
J. EARLSTON THROPP, JR.
DEAR COMRADE

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DAYS OFF IN DIXIE

DAYS OFF IN DIXIE

I

VENDETTAS OF THE SWAMP

WHEN, at Richmond, night closed down on the world in general, and in particular on the long vestibuled train headed toward Florida, you had not seen the real South. You had marvelled at the broadening, dream-like reaches of the lower Potomac; you had had the war vividly recalled as you sped through Quantico, with its quarters for the famous Marines; and thoughts of an earlier war had come to you as you saw the marker, near Chancellorsville, showing where Stonewall Jackson had died. Between that place and Richmond you had run through a country of much broom-sedge and scrub-pine thicket, of stunted oaks and dwarfed bushes—how different from the lovely Valley of the Shenandoah to the westward, and of the James to the East! At dusk you had rolled into Richmond, perhaps just a trifle disillusioned. Where, you wondered, was the South of romance? Had it vanished as completely as some other dreams vanish? Night had then closed down, and your rest

had been disturbed for at least two definite reasons: you were sleeping in perfect vertical alignment with the rear bumpers of the car, and your mind was haunted with the thought that the South of your dreams was a snare and a delusion.

Dim daybreak found you nearly four hundred miles south of Richmond. You had slept through North Carolina. Through northern South Carolina, you had uneasily dreamed. Now you were nearing Charleston. You lay in your berth and looked out in pleasant drowsiness at the fleeting landscape; and you realized that you had come into a new land—that, after all, there *was* a romantic South. You saw the bowed and brown cottonfields, into which flights of mourning doves and meadow larks were even then winging. You saw the melancholy majesty of huge live-oaks. You saw Negro cabins, staggering in their effort to stand, from whose clay chimneys smoke was cheerfully curling. Afar, white against the purple wall of the noble pine forest, you saw a planter's lonely home. But most you were impressed when you entered a dark and dewy gorge of the densest greenery. Here in perpetual mournful beauty the gray-tressed cypresses stood; here giant swamp briers and muscadine vines rioted high among tall trees; here jasmines and smilax festooned with fairy canopies the taller bushes and the shorter trees. An almost impervious undergrowth afforded you only an occasional glimpse beyond the borders of the swamp—a darksome vista where gleamed gloomy waters and where shone afar warm, pale sunlight on

gray moss banners and silvered bay leaves. You saw the green shimmer of a brake of dwarf canes, the tall brown skeletons of dead ferns of superb height, the long, level beds of gallberry bushes dipping into savannas carpeted with gay-coloured moss. You were, indeed, passing through the northern end of the great Santee Swamp. And you saw glimpses of it from a train rushing at sunrise at a speed of forty-five miles an hour. Though you did not know it, I was then your neighbour; for near the southern end of the swamp I was born and have lived; and all my life I have roamed as a hunter-naturalist through the borders and confines of that swamp and through others like it. I should like to take you with me into the swamp itself. Particularly I should like you to observe with me some of the vendettas waged by wild life of this picturesque and little-known region.

Perhaps more than any other one matter, this thing has been impressed upon me by my years of roaming and study in the swamps and pinelands of the South: that the whole earth is a battleground for wild life, and that, even among the insects, on a contracted stage, war is a constant and apparently a necessary condition. Conflicts rage about us and above us and under our feet. Indeed, if mankind can really succeed in putting an end to war *we* shall be subverting what appears to be one of nature's originally immutable laws. Though Matthew Arnold had no swamp in mind, his description of life as "full of confused alarms of struggle and flight" is

admirably suited to my meaning. Here in the Santee Swamp there is observable one of the most startling contrasts imaginable: it is the contrast between the apparent peace of the dreamy woodland—its lustral silence, its lethal ease, its listless quiet, its haunting and ancient sense of rest—and the actual grim warfare which, under cover of all this curtain of beauty and apparent calm, is constantly and remorselessly waged. It is a land filled with timid fugitives and merciless, crafty followers; but so furtive are both pursued and pursuers that only the most careful watching, the most guarded self-effacement, can yield a true disclosure of these age-old, strange, implacable, sinister feuds. The first I shall describe is that between the rattlesnake and the small mammalia.

In the swamp and pineland country adjacent to the delta of the Santee there are three varieties of the rattlesnake: the hog-nose, the timber, and the diamond-back. The first of these, a curious dwarf, seldom more than eighteen inches long, is of restless, fidgety habits, savage disposition, and a mien rendered strangely distorted by an oddly upturned nose. This little snake is the one which, somewhat the colour of gray sand, lies half buried in it and strikes viciously the foot of the unwary Negro. I never knew its bite to be fatal, but I knew a fisherman who, seeing one swimming near his boat in a lagoon, essayed to pick it up, not recognizing that it was a rattlesnake. The snake struck him in a finger and he was unconscious for ten hours. He recovered; and



*"A darksome vista where pale sunlight gleamed
in gray moss banners."*

he will never pick up a hog-nose again. The venom of this diminutive reptile is exceedingly virulent; it probably is less effective than that of the larger varieties of pit-vipers solely because of its limited quantity. Such a snake will eject through its fangs merely a drop or two of poison. I have teased a seven-foot diamond-back into striking, and the yellowish venom which he left on the pine pole with which he was prodded was enough to fill a teaspoon.

The second kind of rattlesnake is the timber rattler, whose range is the widest of any of the twelve varieties of American rattlers. It would be interesting but for the presence in the same country of a far lordlier serpent of the same type—the great diamond-back, a superb reptile of gorgeous colour, formidable size, and most interesting personality. Berkeley County, of which I write, probably represents the extreme northern limit in the East of the range of this splendid chimera, whose known presence in any forest haunts it with an indefinable sense of danger, even of terror. I should hazard about nine feet as the utmost limit of length to which this regal snake ever attains. Specimens more than eight feet are rare; those six feet long are uncommon, but probably because the true diamond-back is nowhere positively abundant; at least, not east of Texas. The largest one I ever saw was killed about a mile from my home, at a place called Jones' Pond, in July, 1916. It measured seven feet, eleven and one-half inches. Its girth at the largest part of the body was thirteen inches, nor had it just taken a meal. Its tail was a

positive triumph of rattledom, for it bore twenty-nine rattles. But as rattles are continually being broken and torn off, the number is seldom an accurate indication of the snake's age; size is the better criterion.

One day late in August I was in swampy country near the river, at a place known as Bowman's Run. In these Southern woods every dark watercourse, every airy pine ridge, every lone pond, every alluring savanna retiring mistily among the pines is likely to have its name. Many of these are associated with the old families of the region; in the wilder woods the appellations have usually been conferred for convenience by hunters, and that great fraternity passes on the picturesque names by word of mouth from one generation to another. I mention a few of these to show what I mean: Bull Hole, Buck Ridge, Black-tongue Branch, Rattlesnake Drive, Old Harry's Bridge, Fawn Pond, the Crippled Oak, Gum Swamp, Pinckney Run, and a hundred others of distinctive character. Nor let it be thought that a swamp is necessarily a place of darksome, treacherous bogs, with water, water everywhere. Adjacent to the river there is likely to be more or less water, but in the swamp are high ridges, sunny and dry, where the sand is clean and white, and where white oaks grow, and sweet-gums and hollies. I often think, when on such a lone ridge, that some day this whole country will be properly drained, and then these ridges will be choice sites for winter homes. But I must return to my little story of Bowman's Run.

A dark wood stream, after traversing leagues of lonely pine forest, there flowed with a sibilant, listless ripple into the broad yellow Santee. I was sitting on a log and all about me the level green of gallberries and huckleberries stretched away in shimmering sunlight. The world appeared steeped in a warm dream of summertime peace. But well I knew that a vendetta would soon be disclosed to me. And it was.

On the ground, only fifty yards distant, a gray squirrel gave a sudden bark: *Quack! quack! squay!!* This instantly changed into a wild chattering, a furious tirade of excited denunciation. Now a gray squirrel is a comparatively silent creature. In parks, where he is protected, he seldom makes a sound; in the wild, when he barks he means something. Perhaps it is one male challenging another; perhaps two mates are calling; oftenest it is an indication of sudden and startled terror. This is especially true of the rapid, chattering tone.

The squirrel that I heard did not stay on the ground. It leaped on to a black-gum tree and dashed ten feet up its trunk, where it hung for a moment, visibly palpitating. Then it agilely turned head downward, and at once it recommenced its furious barking at some object hidden in the bushes at the foot of the tree. It descended a foot or two, and its extreme valour in so doing was apparent because the poor creature's utter fright was so patent. But it never got nearer the ground than about seven feet.

I left my log and walked over slowly, assuming

that gingerly, conciliatory attitude toward everything stepped on which is most natural to one who knows that he is in snaky country. The squirrel, seeing the approach of a new enemy, fled chattering up to the first fork of the tree. When within twenty feet of the tree, I marked a slight stir in the bushes, discerned a slow weaving movement; I even heard the soft rasp of cold scales on cold scales. I halted, and the movement ceased. I stepped forward; then the diamond-back's rattles whirred in that arid, intense, ventriloquistic song of death. To locate the position of a rattler in dense brush merely by the sound of his rattling is a most difficult and baffling matter. Knowing where this serpent was, I now plainly discerned him, the colour of autumn-strewn oak leaves, fear-somely heaped in his ashen coil. I went nearer, whereupon the rattles whirred more swiftly—indeed, wildly—and the whole huge body of the snake rose gradually as if on slow springs, while all of it distended strangely, ominously. I do not think that many observers have noticed this distention and this rising of his coil, as if gathering his strength for a mighty assault, in a coiled rattler. I was close enough to see the glare in the baleful cold yellow eyes, the massive articulation of the wide jaws, the faint, chill pallor of lips as hard as steel and as contemptuous as death itself. While I stood still the body of the snake would subside; its size would gradually shrink before my very eyes, and the song of the rattles would fade into a sinister whir, less importunate and imperative. But at my slightest

movement all the formidable and grim menace would be repeated.

Finally I came close enough to see that a young squirrel lay on the ground just in front of the great reptile. The squirrel was dead. Many of us talk of the cruelties of war; in the swamp there is warfare all the time. Knowing from experience that it is no great feat for a mature gray squirrel to bite through a human hand, I think that it is possible for a squirrel, if he could nerve himself to the risk of getting the proper grip, to take a terrible revenge on even the largest diamond-back. But I never knew a squirrel to fight a rattler, even in defense of its young. The chattering rodent will make a lot of noise, but in vapid barking, the counterfeit of valour, all his courage is vapoured away. He feels but he does not act. If he were like the mongoose, a creature of the same general size and build, he would soon become the terror of the rattler, as the mongoose is of the cobra. But nature will not have it so. Therefore a mother squirrel will watch a diamond-back take her baby, and she will have her revenge out in feeling.

The great rattler of which I write, in this particular region described, feeds almost wholly on young mammals or grown mammals of smaller size. My observations have led me to know that chief among these are young squirrels, rabbits, opossums, sometimes baby raccoons, minks, and full-grown wood rats and mice. He is also very fond of certain small birds, of toads, of other snakes, and of frogs. I have killed a rattler that had just eaten about a dozen

large tadpoles, which he had evidently caught in very shallow water among the sedges on the borders of a pond. The Seminole Indians called the diamond-back "the Great King." And toward practically all the animals and birds and reptiles that inhabit his domain he bears a certain significance of relationship.

That this relationship is not wholly one of masterdom is readily shown. The razorback hog delights in tearing to pieces and devouring the largest serpent of this species. Neither this formidable reptile, the cotton-mouth moccasin, the coral snake, nor the copperhead—and this list exhausts the list of venomous snakes of North America, if we consider the diamond-back as representative of the great rattler family—appears to have any power over a genuine native razorback; and I attribute partly to the presence of this savage forager over the huge free ranges of the Southern forest the comparatively small number of venomous snakes that one encounters in this otherwise reptilian paradise. But let it be known that we are considering no ordinary pig, which has been known to die of snake bite in a manner ignominious to his race. I mean the real razorback, the kind that I myself have seen tearing to pieces a deer that careless hunters had left on the ground—a deer whose remnants were diaphanous when we arrived. I have seen a savage old razorback sow, frantic for food while trying to suckle eleven pigs, run down and kill a lamb and bear it away in barbarous triumph in her crocodile-like mouth. A

razorback is a pineland pirate; and he is a buccaneer that makes short shrift of any snake. His insurance against snake bite is his hide. The serpent strikes, and the poison is deadly; but it seldom penetrates to the circulation.

Another enemy of the diamond-back is the white-tail deer, almost incredibly abundant in the swamp. He kills the reptile by leaping on it with all four feet drawn into a four-headed lance, weighted by the weight of the deer. Dogs are victims of the diamond-back, and often with terrible swiftness. Many an old hunter has heard his favourite hound baying off at a little distance, and has reached the spot to find that the sudden hush in the baying meant that the hound was already dead. Stock suffers from the attacks of the diamond-back. I have seen cows that had been struck. The wound is commonly on the udder, and I have wondered whether the serpent did not recognize that as a peculiarly vulnerable place. Stock so injured usually dies. Of course, the larger rattlers give off a distinctive odour, recognizable by man and readily apprehended from afar by the keener sense of smell of animals.

Nor is it in the summer alone that snakes are to be dreaded, for this region marks the southern limits of the latitude of hibernation. Usually snakes, frogs, alligators, turtles, and the like hibernate here; but if the winter is warm their hibernation may end prematurely. They may make the proper gestures toward a winter's retirement; but all such plans may be abandoned if a warm sun begins to shine insin-

uatingly on the creatures' dens, wherever they may be. I have at times seen supposedly sleeping creatures abroad in December, January, and February; and when they do come forth of their own volition they appear to have all their wits about them. However, I have seen whole rafts and shoals of moccasins washed out of winter quarters by a flood in the river; and they appeared numb, dazed, and stupid in every respect save one—the power to strike with swiftness and accuracy.

There is a general belief that before striking a rattlesnake “charms” or hypnotizes his victim. There is more truth in this than one might suppose; but the so-called charm is due less to any deliberate exercise of unusual power by the serpent than to the dread, frantic, fascinated fear of his intended prey. This understanding of the matter can be readily substantiated.

A load of rough firewood had been hauled into my yard on the plantation. Some of the big logs were hollow. A short time after the wood had been heaved off the wagon I heard some chickens setting up a racket near the woodpile. On going there, I saw that several of the flock were greatly excited; but one, an old hen, was in mortal terror. Ordinarily her feathers decorated her normally; but now she had the appearance of a frizzled chicken. Before her, and within striking distance, high in his menacing heap, a huge diamond-back, which had evidently been brought in from the woods in one of the hollow logs, was “charming” her by the fascination of terror.

The hen was crouched, and I am sure that her knees were shaking. At this moment an old hound ambled around the corner of the house. When he saw and smelled the snake, he put his head back and howled lugubriously. Most dogs would have barked, and some fools would have rushed in; the hound had attained an age of wisdom, discretion, and the power to speak sagely and warningly. But the strangest part of the performance was yet to come. A cat had been dozing beside the woodpile, and this general alarm had awakened her. With one eye of ancient craftiness fixed on the hound, she began one of those amazing feline stretches; she lifted her tail vertically, humped her back loftily, and stood absolutely on tiptoe. While thus elevated in tense muscular relaxation she saw the snake. Immediately she faced it, the serpent then being about eight feet distant from her. Her extraordinary posture did not change; but her tail furred out, her hair rose, and she assumed the typical attitude of a cat cornered by a dog. Meanwhile she rocked back and forth, swaying as if hypnotized. Now and then she would lift a foot warily, but it would be replaced with great care. She seemed to be going through some mystic Egyptian or modern dance. As you can imagine, all these performances made me uneasy; I felt as if, unless I were careful, I might begin to be antic also. In such a case a small rifle is a handy weapon, and such a piece ended the career of the diamond-back and the paralysis of some of my domestic circle. I give this example to show that a rattler, when he is operating

close to his victim, does have a certain dread power to fascinate; but of course he is powerfully assisted by his prey's shocked state of mind.

I have said more about serpents than I intended to say; but this is because these creatures live by preying; therefore they are forever on the warpath. I shall now try to tell of a vendetta of the water, and though I mention a reptile, this time the creature is an alligator.

If you walk through the swamp in a moderately dry season you can go for miles without wetting your feet; but of course part of the time you will be crossing fallen logs that span watercourses. Now and then you will come to ponds or lakes—lone, placid, beautiful places; sometimes they are mere earthquake holes, small but very deep; again they will stretch for a mile or more, with edges of lily pads and with a fathomless black channel. Sometimes these lakes will have little islets where grow cypresses in the friendly dense tops of which many aquatic birds nest—blue herons, egrets, and cranes. In the waters themselves fish abound—black bass, mudfish, pike, bullheads, and perch. Here, too, are whole battalions of frogs, water snakes of many kinds, turtles, and alligators. It is of the war waged by these last that I wish to tell.

The American alligator is a survivor of the Pleistocene Age. He should perhaps have disappeared with some of the other aquatic monsters. But sometimes Nature is very whimsical. She often makes mistakes, and she permits the survival of creatures

with which we could well dispense. In the Santee Swamp and in the streams and lakes adjacent thereto the alligator attains a maximum length of about sixteen feet. But a twelve-foot bull will anywhere be accounted a big one. There are larger alligators in this region than there are in Florida, because they have been less mercilessly hunted. But nothing could be more merciless than the manner in which the alligator himself hunts. He is a vendettist of major dimensions. His life is one long criminal career—if, indeed, anything natural is criminal. His existence is nothing but a prolonged and sinister stalk, with many cruel endings and many re-beginnings.

First of all, the alligator is a cannibal. The bull will eat his own young. If in some manner one alligator is rendered helpless, others will kill him and devour him. I have seen a huge old saurian of this type kill a smaller 'gator that I had caught on a line. They feed constantly on fish, on waterfowl, particularly on wood-ducks, and on almost anything that swims into their waters. It is said that an alligator will not attack a man. This is not true. I know of one Negro who was thrown down in shallow water and terribly injured by a bull alligator. I think that a man might swim across an alligator-infested lagoon; but this fact would not prove that the 'gator will never attack. There are as many authentic instances of attack by alligators as there are of attack by sharks on our coasts. The thing is rare, but it is not impossible. Alligators are hesitant about

troubling a deer. Apparently there is a wholesome respect for the deer's sharp hoofs, which are truly admirable defensive weapons. But to ordinary animals the 'gator is an implacable foe. The hog that roots on the marshy edges, the calf that wanders with its mother to the brink of the lagoon, the hound that, in pursuit of a deer, swims into these mysterious waters—each has his fate sealed. When his victim is swimming, the 'gator simply drags him down grimly, usually with a silent ferocity that is appalling. If he is on the shore, a mauling blow from the creature's powerful, muscular, wedge-shaped tail stuns the prey until the attacker seizes it in his jaws of iron. I have never known an alligator to attack anything on land, and I have never seen it actually eat its prey, though I have seen it catch and kill it.

One day I was walking down an open pine ridge in the swamp when I came upon a splendid bull alligator. He was a quarter of a mile from the nearest water. The time was midsummer, and the pond in which he had been staying had evidently become uncomfortably shallow. He was heading for the river, about a mile distant. As it is unusual to encounter so large a 'gator so far from his element, I decided to try some experiments with him. I walked straight at him, when, to my astonishment, he suddenly rose high on his blunt legs, opened wide his cavernous mouth, and rushed at me savagely but very awkwardly. His advance did not bring him more than fifteen feet when he subsided and his jaws closed with a loud,

menacing, hissing sigh. Several times he made the same kind of attack. But he seemed to sense that I had the advantage of him. A green-pine pole that I presented for his close inspection he broke in half in spasmodic fury with a single clamp of his jaws. I came almost near enough for his tail to reach me, just to see him use it. He did, with incredible skill and force. When I let him alone, he began to crawl away in a slow and dignified fashion. But such a creature is a menace, especially to young stock. I shot him. Later we got a wood-cart within reach of him and hauled him to the plantation, where the Negroes cut huge slab-like steaks from his tail. They claim that one is made courageous by eating the flesh of this reptile! If heroism depends on this I fear that I shall never be decorated for bravery. I am rather of the opinion that it takes heroism to partake of such a repast.

The alligator is one of those wild creatures that have few natural enemies. Man is decidedly the worst. The young 'gators, in crawling from their sandhill nest to the water, run a gamut of dangers as they do in the water while they are small. There is probably much cannibalism among this strange family. But this saurian enjoys comparative freedom from natural foes.

In looking at the swamp from the train, one may imagine that it is a region of delight, where flowers festoon all trees and where mocking-birds carol night and day. The only mocking-bird I ever saw in the swamp was lost. And, while I do hear the parula

warbler singing and, in certain seasons, Bachman's finch and the veery, with occasionally a far call from a wild turkey or a scattered covey of wood-quail, the swamp is not a place of music; unless, indeed, we accept as music those grim bellowings which resemble the bass profundities of the dragon in "Faust"—I mean the roar of the bull alligator. This is to me the most impressive sound in all nature, for I know of no sound to compare with it in depth, subterranean quality, and awesome grim grandeur.

I am sensible that I have merely touched upon some of the more significant vendettas of the swamp. This subject is as vast as the territory itself. But no man can traverse these wild regions year after year without coming to know that, as far as the wild life is concerned, a desperate, stern struggle is constantly being waged. Those who pity beasts and birds in pens and cages should remember that at least these captives are shut away from all their wild enemies and from that desolate freedom which is less than liberty because it is haunted.

Six miles from home, on a causeway in the swamp, there is a big pine with a bullet scar in it. There, long ago, one man killed another. It is a place of dread. Yet to me the beauty of the whole wide swamp, shimmering in nameless and dewy allurements, has dread about it; for its loveliness cannot hide the reality that even this beauty and this charm are mere physical, almost inanimate aspects of the landscape, and that they do not represent the life of the place. I love the beautiful in nature; but Nature

herself I fear. She is an inexorable mistress; and vaguely out of every wildwood scene she looks at me, inscrutably smiling, but not as a human mother smiles, and not as smiles upon her lover a mortal sweetheart.

II

VENDETTAS OF THE MARSH

STANDING on the mainland shore of Washoe Plantation and looking eastward over the vast expanse of Blake's Marsh, it seemed to me that I had never viewed a scene that appeared so peaceful, so full of the charm of quiet solitude. For three miles, to where the dark outline of Murphy's Island rose, the reedland extended; it was solitary, shimmering, silent. Here and there in its green waste there were small hummocks or clumps of myrtle and red cedar, and through the marsh wound salt creeks of many sizes, but all alike in their mazy wanderings and in the nature of their ministrations. Marsh and creek and hummock and distant barrier island—all lay in dreamy peace in the mellow sunshine of mid-December. But for the inhabitants of the marsh there is no peace; for perhaps in no situation does wild life find itself more constantly hunting or hunted; and I know of no other place that can approach Blake's Marsh for the number and the fury of the vendettas waged there. If anywhere, Nature is there "red in tooth and claw."

Nowhere on the Atlantic seaboard is there a stretch of marsh larger and more beautiful than this one;

since it is controlled by a hunting club with rigorous laws protecting game, nowhere to my knowledge is wild life more abundant or more interesting in its variety. In other marshlands along that region of the Southern coast much of the wild life has disappeared; but here it is probably as abundant as it was in the days of Columbus. At least Nature exercises the same balancing power now as she did then, and as she always does when the hand of man does not disturb her laws.

But fearful are the lives of Nature's children who live under her code. This I had impressed upon me soon after I had taken the sandy causeway that led into the marsh. I had come perhaps three hundred yards from the mainland shore and had stopped under a scrub pine to watch a flock of some forty willets on an oyster bank bordering a salt creek. At a near-by bend I saw a pair of mallards, their plumage gleaming in the sunlight, drifting idly upon the placid waters. I thought of their coming to this winter home at the mouth of the Santee. They had flown a thousand miles or more to reach this spot, and doubtless had escaped all the dangers of Bryant's "Waterfowl." But even here, in this most remote and peaceful creek, they were not safe; and they knew it probably better than I did. Yet it was I who first saw their arch-enemy. Low over the marsh, in his leisurely, lordly way, swept a bald eagle. In that region, where there is considerable hunting, the eagle subsists in the winter chiefly upon crippled ducks and upon dead ones that sportsmen have not

pounced upon one of the wooden ducks. He must have sunk his talons into the soft wood, for when he rose he had the decoy firmly gripped. He lifted it perhaps ten feet and then let it fall back into the water. Considering the daily damage that he did to the ranks of the wild fowl, I felt justified in scaring him; this I did effectively by rumpling him with a load of duck shot when he was at a distance that I knew was not a dangerous one for him. For an hour after this incident, while the calm day broadened and the mists rose from the lone reaches of the great marsh, wild ducks in groups of twos and threes and scores and hundreds were continually visible. But not again that day did they gather in happy concourse in the river.

On another morning I saw illustrated in striking fashion this ancient preying of the eagle upon the duck. A lone mallard, hotly pursued by a male bald eagle, was flying desperately up the river, and passed within a hundred feet of where I was in the edges of the marsh. The eagle stayed above his prey, and so powerful and masterly was his flight that it seemed to me that he might at any time have caught it. But his actual taking of it was by a manœuvre as remarkable as it was graceful. This happened between Blake's Marsh and Grace Island, about three quarters of a mile from the mouth of the Santee. The eagle, evidently having the fleeing duck at his mercy, was not content to take him in the ordinary manner; but, rushing downward, he turned almost completely over under his fast-flying prey and seized

it by the breast. A few powerful beats of his wings righted him, and he flew off across the river toward Cedar Island. I do not think that many observers have seen the bald eagle take prey in the manner described; I have seen it but once. Yet the manœuvre was executed with such ease that I have no doubt that it had been practised before.

Very different, indeed, from the warfare waged by eagles upon wild fowl is the nature of the warfare that the raccoon carries on against the shellfish of Blake's Marsh, especially the oysters. This wild and wide stretch of reed country is an ideal hunting ground for raccoons; and that they are numerous everywhere there is attested by the fact that in every pathway through the marsh there are innumerable tracks made by them—tracks that resemble the imprints made by a tiny and delicate hand. No haunt could be more congenial for these intelligent furbearers. The marsh yields them abundant food, and in the adjacent woods of the mainland and the barrier island they find big timber for daytime retirement. Wherever the raccoon is hunted, he rarely appears in daylight; but in Blake's Marsh I have seen him pacing along with wily sedateness when the sun was high overhead. And more than once I have come upon raccoons quite unconcernedly sleeping in the low comfortable crotches of red cedar trees standing in the hummocks of the marsh. I have often awakened some of these daydreamers, and invariably their attitude was the same. They were very much bored that I should disturb them; they shifted their

positions with slow and drowsily snarling complaints; they blinked at me with the discomfort of those who are awakened out of sweet slumber. But they never seemed to fear me; they never once regarded me with that bright-eyed wariness that is the commonest trait of most of the folk of the wild. The impression they conveyed was merely that they thought me exceedingly tiresome to wake them.

But when the raccoon is on the ground he is one of the most intelligent animals living. Early one morning I was ranging the marsh with a setter dog when he came to what is locally known as a slue—a shallow pond in the reeds. My dog encountered a raccoon on the edge of the pond, and he began barking frantically at his discovery. By the time I had broken through the reeds both raccoon and setter were swimming across the small lagoon. When about halfway across, the racoon, having swum against a submerged stump, came to a halt. It was just under the surface; for when he climbed upon it he was almost clear of the water. He turned calmly and faced his pursuer with nonchalant courage. I was close enough to see that the left hindfoot of the creature was gone; it had evidently been cut off in a trap; and this injury made the coming fray an apparently unequal one. But a curious surprise was in store for the dog. As he swam up to the raccoon that crafty creature reached far out with his delicate black hands, caught the dog with admirable nicety just behind the ears, and shoved his head gently but firmly beneath the water. The setter's head was

quietly held submerged for a moment. Then it was released, and the raccoon stood on negligently alert guard for a further attack. The dog, however, had had enough. He evidently realized that he was dealing with a superior intelligence. He swam back to me; and, though he barked wildly and vociferously and told me all about it, he scrupulously observed the better part of valour. I left the raccoon crouched on the hidden stump, waiting there patiently and wisely and gravely for whatever form of attack the fates might send next. If I judged his expression aright, it was one of ancient understanding of, and huge tolerance for, the changes and chances of this mortal life.

But on another occasion I was given an opportunity to see that, despite appearances, the wisdom of the raccoon is far from being infallible. I was walking along the muddy bank of Blake's Marsh about half a mile from Murphy's Island. Here and there the low tide exposed oyster banks, and among these were many curlew and willets. A dark object on an oyster bank attracted my attention. As I came up to it I found, to my surprise, that it was an old male raccoon—dead from drowning.

He had been covered and uncovered by one tide, but I think not more. His right forefoot was fatally caught in an oyster! Some time during the preceding night, I supposed, the raccoon had been foraging among the oysters, as he had probably done systematically for years; but at last he met a tartar of a bivalve. The oyster that held him was not partic-

ularly large, but it did appear articulated with unusual strength. Here was a singular tragedy of the wild; for despite all his struggles, the raccoon had been grimly held fast while the tide crept upward and submerged him. I am sure, however, that this was one of those accidents of nature that is seldom repeated. I was surprised that the captive had not gnawed off his foot, for that is the customary practice in regions where steel traps are known. I was told recently by a very reliable Negro trapper of the Santee delta that of nine traps that he visited in a single morning each of seven contained the forefoot of a raccoon. And I can say that at least one in three of the raccoons that I see have but three legs. There is much that is pitiful about these cripples; but certainly their affliction does not make them beggars, and they manage to get along quite as well as their four-footed brothers.

Of all the birds of the marsh the most interesting to me is the clapper rail, which in Blake's Marsh is remarkably abundant. Indeed, were it not for natural enemies, I think the marsh would be overpopulated with these noisy, secretive, elusive, resourceful birds. But their foes are many. Undoubtedly the marsh raccoons and wildcats capture many, especially the young birds. Not infrequently a giant tide will sweep to destruction thousands of nests. The common crow delights in nothing so much as in destroying the eggs of this bird. The very home that it makes for its eggs and young is of necessity built in a precarious situation, for the whole region is subject

to tidal influences. However, the instinct of the bird—I should venture to say reasoning power but for fear of controversy—teaches it to build one of the most remarkable nests. While the tiny marsh sparrow or Worthington's wren builds a bulky nest high up in the marsh, binding it together with blades of the marsh, much as the blackbird does, the clapper rail does better. He sometimes—not always, for occasionally his nest is placed above the reach of ordinary tides—constructs a nest that, either by good chance or by positive design, slides up and down the marsh stems as the tides rise and fall. The nest is constructed largely of the light dry stems of dead marsh, and the softer parts of the lining are withered marsh blades. I have often seen these nests at low tide flat on the mud, and the same nests when the tide was up floating on the quiet water, gently anchored by marsh stems turned about the growing marsh. I am not prepared to say that the birds know exactly what they are doing; but the fact of these sliding nests remains. Undoubtedly mishaps to the eggs often occur; indeed, I have seen nests with the eggs tipped out and the nests themselves lodged halfway down the stems of the marsh. But the rising and falling of the tide are so steady and so gradual that the nests are usually handled gently and effectively.

I mentioned the marsh wren as a bird building a very large nest, high up in the reeds and woven of marsh blades. Cheerful and innocent as is this tiny dweller in the wasteland, I believe his particular

enemy is more ruthless than almost any that the other birds have to meet; at least there is something gruesome about his attack. This is a small marsh mouse which climbs the reed stems on which the nest is suspended, enters the circular hole at the side leading to the interior, catches the inmate if he can and destroys it, devours the eggs, and then appropriates the home for himself and his family! I know of no more complete example of Bolshevism in nature. It is such a thing as this that makes me know that the wide and placid marsh, shimmering in the warm sunlight, misty in the vague rain, or blanched in the pale moonlight, is the scene of many a tragedy where the survival of the fittest and the cleverest and the quickest and the strongest is continually being determined. And though I love wild scenes and the quiet loneliness of a place like this, behind the beauty of its perpetually autumnal landscape I seem to see the face of Nature, anciently wise, inexorable, not quite familiar, not quite smiling.

There is a vendetta of the pinelands adjacent to Blake's Marsh that terminates at the borders of the marsh. This is the picturesque feud of deer and hound. The marsh has been, time out of mind, a sanctuary for hunted deer. Sometimes they come all the way from Wambaw Swamp, eleven miles away, to take refuge here in this strange solitude. Ever since boyhood I have known that a deer that succeeded in reaching the marsh ahead of the hounds had made good his escape. And both the pursuers and the pursued recognize this as a fact. Many a

time I have seen deer in flight entering the marsh; and hardly had they reached the fringes of their wide sanctuary before they would break the speed of their race. Many a time also I have known fine packs of hounds to break off their chase abruptly at the mysterious borders of the wasteland. Old hounds especially, when they come within sight of the lone expanse of reeds, abandon their game, however eager the pursuit had until that time been. It is a case of instinct, for in the marsh a dog has no chance against a deer. To begin with, a deer can go where a dog cannot follow; and again, where the deer has the advantage of footing he will turn to bay, and a buck at bay in a situation favourable to him is no mean antagonist for a pack of hounds.

One January day at noon I was walking along the southern end of the marsh, just where the lands of the Santee Club terminate. As I was on neutral ground, I had a hound with me. From a dense hummock of cedar and myrtle we started two great bucks, giants of their kind; and I may say that it is rather an odd fact that two old male deer are often at this time of the year found associated. They rocked off lithely, and I supposed that they would run the margin of a wide slue—a place so boggy and apparently bottomless that I could not see how even a duck could keep its footing there. To my surprise, the two great animals chose to cross this morass. Perhaps they knew that by so doing they could baffle the dog that was now clamouring on their track. The slue was a hundred yards wide and several hundred long. In

long, lithe bounds the deer entered it; and, instead of floundering and sinking, as any other animals might have done, they never lost their stride, never faltered. I could readily see that their effort was a heroic one, for their flanks heaved, their big haunch muscles were vividly expanded and corded, and their antlered heads tossed somewhat wildly; but their flight through that dreadful morass was swift, orderly, and graceful. The hound attempted to follow the deer. He got only about fifteen yards into the slue when his footing failed him. He was trying to run and to swim at the same time. Failing in both, he turned back toward me. By the time he had reached me, mud-drenched and crestfallen, the two bucks had gained the farther side of the bog and were safely entering a sanctuary of reeds as dense as some of the papyrus brakes along the Nile.

Late one afternoon, while on an open causeway leading into Blake's Marsh, I heard two hounds coming in my direction. I moved up against a great pine overlooking the marsh. In a few moments my expectations were realized—a fine buck came bounding out of the mainland woods. He was in full flight, yet no sooner did he cross the mystic margin of the marsh than he broke his stride. His wild run became an easy bounding, and this in turn a walk. He passed within thirty yards of me without seeing me. The hounds meanwhile were eagerly approaching. From their voices I knew them to be young dogs. Soon they came in sight, and of their speed and earnestness there could be no question.

They were not more than three-quarters grown. They passed me wildly, the sand flying under their feet. The buck was now only a little distance ahead and in plain sight. In a moment the big deer turned in an indolent, scornful manner, and a strange encounter ensued.

This deer, unwounded and certainly capable of hours more of flight, turned to bay. Indeed, he went farther than that; his attitude was offensive rather than defensive, and his abrupt change of tactics took the dogs completely by surprise. Lowering his crested head, rolling his eyes, and managing to bulge his neck until he looked formidable indeed, he faced his pursuers. They, amazed and baffled, evidently thought that their real prey had escaped them, and that they had encountered an enemy which they were not capable of managing. At any rate, their advance halted immediately; their baying was perfunctory. Soon it grew fitful. And within five minutes they had turned tail and were making good time on the back track through the pinelands. Probably they had never before run a deer into the marsh; and certainly if they do so again they will behave as all knowing hounds of that region do; they will abandon the chase at the brink of the deer's ancient sanctuary.

III

THE SORCERY OF THE TRAILING HOUND

TO THAT ancient trilogy of mysteries unsolvable—the way of the serpent on the sand, the way of the bird in the air, and the way of a man with a maid—I would add a fourth: the mystery of the trailing hound. Perhaps there is no common phenomenon which is less understood and less appreciated than this. A good dog of any kind will perform a miracle of trailing before our eyes, yet we remain unimpressed. Probably, our apparent disinterest is less a matter of sluggish observation than it is a lazy acceptance of something really very wonderful. For the thing is marvellous; and a study of it cannot fail to elevate our consideration for the whole canine race.

The place is a wild sea beach. The situation is a lonely uninhabited island, miles off the Carolina coast. The time is just after sunset, and the evening glow is suffusing with a warm and rosy light the long thickets of sweet myrtle, the towering yellow pines, the waste sand dunes, the tawny surf. The characters in the picture are my hound Trigger and I—in this business at hand mentioned strictly in the order of their relative importance. From a wood

road that has wound duskily through the semi-tropical forest of the solitary coastal island, we have suddenly emerged upon the beach. Before us in the sundown rolls the Atlantic. I am just beginning to experience those vague heavings of heart that one nearly always feels upon encountering the ocean in the sunset, bringing with them longings for lost loves of the long ago and all that, when my romantic reverie is suddenly interrupted by the behaviour of my hound. He, too, is thinking, and rather urgently and definitely, of a lost love; for he has come upon the trail of a deer. Sometime in the late forenoon—so I judged by a careful examination of the tracks—a buck had come out of the forest and had paced up the beach. He had walked, as I afterward ascertained, some two miles down the sands, enjoying, no doubt, the wild freedom and solitude of this savage loneliness. The beach sands were dry and powdery and drifting; they were of the whispering, faintly hissing variety, fine and arid. As the wind moved them among the blades and stems of the beach grasses, they made a faint sibilant shrilling. In such Sahara dryness, how could a buck leave a scent—at least, such a trail as Trigger could pick up easily? Yet such a scent had evidently been left; or would it be fairer to say that the hound's nose found what nothing else in the world could discover—an aroma shed many long hours before? Human noses appear to be chiefly decorative, and sometimes dubious in that capacity, both as to shape and to colour; and they have so far degenerated as to have

lost all power to detect any save the grossest and most flagrant scents. We smell a rose at a distance of a yard, perhaps, and a petunia bed has our awareness at a greater distance; a hound's nose, trained to roses, would surely take up the odour at two hundred yards or more. Man's nose scents not the bob-white at all. A good setter or pointer, working up a damp breeze, will wind the bird across an acre field.

But the mere fact of Trigger's picking up the trail was not what most interested me, since that I accounted for simply by giving his nose its due. But how was he able, I wondered, to know which way the buck had gone? Why did he not run the back track? To put the larger question, How does any dog, following any trail, know which direction to take? Here on this dry sea beach, with a trail a half day old, perhaps Trigger was to answer the question for me. I say "perhaps," for this problem is one which has never been definitely solved. I hope to be able to establish certain presumptions in favour of certain views.

Apparently, to take up the trail, the hound made no use of his sight. Nor have I ever noticed definitely that a trailing hound would make use of his eyes to guide him. At such a time, the hound's eyes have in them a liquid wild luminance, bright and undetermined, by no means concentrated to close observation, and seeming to express in eerie light the awakening of clairvoyant powers in other senses.

Probably, both the sense of sight and the sense of hearing come occasionally into use. Not infrequently



Watching the dogs is often as much fun as bagging the game.

I have observed a trailing hound pause to listen, especially in a thicket, in the hope that some noise made by the quarry might direct him. Sometimes the hound is thus guided. He often rejoins the pack through giving a momentary ear to its wild music. But the sense of sight cannot, in the nature of the case, often be brought into play. A trailing hound is not frequently afforded a chance to see clearly the contour of the tracks that he is following; therefore, he can rarely rely on the sense of sight to assist him—save, of course, in actually laying eyes on the game. But when he does that, the matter of trailing, in the strict sense, is over. In woods, in powdery sands, over dry hard ground, tracks will either be invisible or distinguishable as mere scratches and holes. A hound never, like a wilderness hunter, rakes aside the leaves and the pinestraw to discover the imprints of a wild fugitive. That a dog depends much on sight is highly improbable; that he occasionally is assisted by it is possible—especially if he be a wise old hound. The sagacity of such a creature would hardly permit it to leave unemployed a salient sense. But when we consider with what readiness and avidity a hound will run a trail in the dark, or when no tracks are apparent, we understand that the sense of smell is the master agent in this performance. I remember with what deep interest I watched one night an old hound unravel, in the glimmering sands of a moonlit glade in the pinelands, the trail of a gray fox. Hunting foxes by moonlight in the Southern woods in mid-winter used to be a favourite sport of mine; and it

taught me something of the behaviour of hounds trailing at night. I was afoot, and, in trying to keep ahead of the fox in the general direction of my hound's advance, I was afforded a close and interesting view of the wary fugitive. Into the faerie glade he stole silently, looking very small and tired; seeming also excessively bored. Because of uncertainty—hardly by design—he proceeded to make what hunters call a “trail puzzle.” He ran here and there, pausing, listening, peering into the silent woodlands that ringed the glade. Of course, the trail that he left was a very criss-crossed affair. After he was gone, my hound named Weser came up. She immediately detected my presence; but evidently as game I was insignificant. The tracks of the fox were discernible in the sand; but the hound could not possibly have followed them by distinguishing the direction they took through seeing the way in which the imprints pointed. For perhaps five minutes Weser wound her way through the mazy trail; at length, with a triumphant yowl, she announced that the mystery had yielded to her patient art. In this macadam-flagstone-concrete age of ours we know that pet dogs seldom have a chance to see a human track. Yet they trail their owners. If I were to hazard a venture as to which dog probably placed habitually some dependence upon sight to guide him over certain places in a trail, I should say the bloodhound. At least, men who have trained bloodhounds to do their eerie work have told me that the great dogs (mild and gentle by disposition) can be taught the

direction that a fugitive has taken by the direction in which his tracks point. But after all, if any trailer had naught but his sight to guide him, he would not trail far. The greyhound, for all his agility and fleetness, for all the wild vigour of his sight and hearing, is practically worthless on a trail.

The dog's great business in a slow and obscure pursuit is not in seeing the track but in snuffing up the scent. Yet, with all his ability as a noser, how can the hound tell, merely by this single sense, which direction to take? One leads to the trail's cold and empty end; the other leads to the quarry. Seldom, indeed, will even the most poorly equipped hound take the wrong direction. And, apparently, the hound has but this one sense to guide him. But I have heard old woodsmen declare that a hound on a very hot scent gets more than scent: he actually gets a delicious taste as well. I am not prepared to say that he does; but often, while working out a "hot corner" into which a stag or a fox has been pressed, I have watched unwearied dogs working greedily with their mouths open, close to the ground, as if they were satisfying, in some degree, the keen sense of taste. Occasionally a hard-pressed quarry will drop foam or blood, or both; and these the following hound will mouth up eagerly. I am not sure that the hound employs the sense of taste in trailing; but I am inclined to believe that there is something of truth suggested by the old woodland expression, "That hound's tasting the trail." I may add that trailing hounds almost always work with their mouths

open, whereas hounds running by sight often close theirs. It is possible that, upon viewing the quarry, the sense of sight is called upon to do what taste and smell had been doing.

Yet even with the two powerful senses of taste and smell at work, the trailing hound does a wonderful thing in heading in the right direction. My hound Trigger, on the lone sea beach, took the right direction, and with but the faintest hesitation. He turned southward. I saw that the tracks of the buck were indeed headed that way. I caught the dog, led him northward along the beach, turned him about seven or eight times so as to confuse his sense of direction, and then put him on the trail again, being careful to point him in the wrong direction. He snuffed knowingly to the right, to the left, gave me a look of rebuke as if he were asking what kind of silly game I were trying to play, turned southward, and settled down to the slot. Despite my attempt to fool him, or at least to test him, he was not in the least uncertain.

Several explanations can be offered for Trigger's mastery of the situation; and these will, of course, apply to any other hound. The first is that he has a nose of such keenness that he could scent mercenary motives in a missionary to Molokai; that his powers of smelling are adjusted to a nicety so exquisite that he is able, even on an old trail in dry sand, to determine which end of a trail is going to "pick up," and which one has in it the element of fading away; that he has certain guides which are

not commonly understood; and the last explanation is that there exists in the trailing hound an abiding element of mystery. Often, indeed, good dogs will make a temporary false start down the wrong end of a trail; but they are usually swift to correct their error, and they do it in that shamefaced way that seems to prove that they consider it the most gauche and amateurish of faults.

To illustrate this point I may say that early one morning it was my good fortune, on the dewy borders of a great tupelo swamp not far from home, to walk up three full-antlered stags. They had been lying together under a fragrant canopy of dwarf pines; when started, they rocked lithely away at right angles, crossing the misty open woods. My two dogs were in the bush-hung pathway behind me, and they had not seen the deer. Quietly, I took them off into the woods and brought them abruptly on the steaming trail. It was so hot that they yelped joyously in unison and tore down the backtrack. The younger and swifter hound was leading. Perhaps thirty yards they thus raced; then the older dog overtook the younger, snarled and snapped at it viciously, whirled, and came tearing back. The two made the turn simultaneously; and it appeared to me that the old dog had administered a rebuke to the impetuous youngster for playing so silly a trick. Nor is it unusual for a trained dog to admonish and to punish a misbehaving youngster. Many times in the woods I have watched hounds hesitate on trails, run back and forth a little, take small circles; but

always at last the puzzle would be solved. Of course, there naturally comes a time when the last vestige of scent vanishes (or evaporates, or makes its own peculiar escape); how long before this occurs will depend on the strength and the quality of the original scent, and those atmospheric conditions such as stillness and dampness which are favourable to the long retention of odours. It is said that a good bloodhound will follow a human trail that is twenty hours old; I have known a deerhound to follow one fifteen hours old, and to take notice of one older than that. But the hours intervening had been windless damp ones. Dampness holds scent, but rain will wash it away. When the sun is hot and the wind is blowing, when the earth is exposed and dry, any scent, however heavy, will be soon dissipated—or at least with relative quickness. I have seen hounds completely lose a trail while crossing a dry ridge and pick up again in a cool damp hollow beyond.

We have seen the hound Trigger taking the right end of a trail on a bare beach. In the woods his method is somewhat different. And the difference so observed may assist us in understanding this mystery of the trailing hound. If my observations are correct, it is easier for a dog to follow with certainty a trail through the woods than it is along bare ground. The reasons for this presumed truth are interesting, and have never, I think, been discussed.

In wildwoods a good hound "travels on the bushes." He is forever, unless literally on the tail of the quarry, smelling grass, bushes, low-sweeping

limbs. Of course, he gets scent of the game from these—possibly a sort of general aroma that the wild creature has left in brushing by; certainly, in the case of deer, the powerful and permeating odour, faintly sweet (and in the deer noticeable to human beings) from the great scent glands behind the knees on the back legs. While it is difficult to make an estimate such as the following, it is probable that these glands utter a more heavy and arresting scent than do the glands between the hoofs. The scent deposited by the deer's knee glands is usually left just at the height to which a dog stands; and that fact accounts for a hound's travelling high through brushy undergrowth. A close observer in the woods, before he looks for tracks, can generally tell whether a hound is following a fox or a deer; a fox, wild turkey, rabbit, raccoon, or the like will hold a dog on the ground; a deer that has walked through brush will incline his pursuer to lift his head. True, reynard, in travelling fast, will do much jumping over and through bushes—"high-sidling" as it is sometimes called; but in an ordinary chase, when stealing along craftily, he prefers to skulk under and around bushes. Of course, the same thing is true of a deer—that is, unless in wild flight he will dodge and skulk. I have often seen deer moving about naturally, or but slightly startled, deliberately choose to squeeze under a barbed wire fence rather than jump over it, and stoop and almost crawl to get under a leaning tree that could have been much more easily leaped. Yet the height at which a deer stands determines that

much of the scent he leaves shall be deposited higher than that left by smaller game.

Much of the foregoing information may appear obvious; its restatement, however, seems necessary to a careful examination of a hound's pursuit of a deer through brushy country. Here, how can he tell in which direction his quarry has gone? It seems not unlikely that a buck, let us say, brushing through a clump of myrtles or bays, passing from south to north, will leave more scent on the south side and on those leaves turned that way than he can on the side of the leaves which he would not brush in following such a course. Precisely the same thing is true of a deer's going through grass, either the common low growths or the knee-high sorts like broom-sedge. One who has watched the action of a careful hound following a difficult trail through grass will have observed with what intelligent and delicate solicitude the sagacious trailer has paused to sniff up and down the stems and leaves, giving special attention to both side of the blades. It is not at all unlikely that such a dog's amazing power of scent is capable of detecting against which side of the grass blades and stems a deer has been consistently brushing, and of being thereby enabled to determine the direction which the game has taken.

But the mere power of the hound to carry a cold trail properly is not the most remarkable feature of his ability: he possesses the artistry of high discriminative powers. Of course, as of men, so of dogs: there are kinds and kinds. There are some dogs,

even some hounds, that have no virtues in the woods; and at home they seem to possess little more than hearty appetites. But the trained hound can be taught to run a fox and nothing else, or a deer, or a raccoon. Yet in woods wild enough for one of these creatures to be found, it is likely that many will be present. The trained dog will enter a dewy maze of cover, reject allurements in the way of scents as tempting as sin, and by nothing will be turned aside from his urgent business of finding the proper quarry. Despite his powers of discrimination, the hound commonly either does not distinguish between the deer and the wild turkey or else he considers the two equally important. Every deerhound I ever knew would take a turkey track; but the latter must be very fresh. The scent given off by a wild turkey is quite heavy and penetrating; but inasmuch as it is not produced by regular glands, as is the deer's, it is the more readily dissipated. It is somewhat amusing to watch a good hound reach the place in the trail of a turkey which marks the great bird's taking flight. There is, of course, no more trail; and possibly a few rare hounds know what this sudden end means. But the average trailer will be painfully, irreconcilably baffled. It seems to the dog what witchcraft or necromancy seems to man.

As the hound takes the turkey trail, so the bird-dog will occasionally follow a deer trail. Naturally, he follows the turkey, finding in it the amazing climax of all his trained ambitions. The behaviour of a setter or a pointer after a deer is usually some-

thing of a burlesque. I have seen a bird-dog run after a deer and bark violently at it, thinking it, no doubt, of the cattle family, which all bird-dogs regard as having been created for their occasional diversion. There are a few instances on record of bird-dogs which have been trained to follow and to point deer. With a dog thus broken I have had no experience, but it is evident that the thing is possible. Indeed, with the truly sensible and intelligent dog, what education, and what effect from it are not possible?

Mention has been made of the fact that the deer has distinct glands for secreting and giving off scent, whereas many other wild creatures (especially the birds) have apparently but a general aroma which identifies them. The reason for this difference is possibly simple: birds usually find one another by calling. Deer find one another by following the scent—which is, after all, but a silent language, a tacit message which becomes a menace to the creature leaving it whenever the enemy picks it up. Deer regularly follow one another by scent; occasionally they will bleat. But by nature they are singularly silent, self-effacing creatures. One of the most exciting woodland sights that ever came to my vision was that of a buck, in the mating season, following at full speed the trail of a doe. He was running with his head low, and after he had passed, an examination of the trail showed me that the doe had passed not long before.

When the good hound enters deer country, it is

not to be thought that he unravels the mystery set before him without distinct effort—or a sort which appears to have something mental in it. He may have clear sailing; but the chances are that he will encounter complications. And our respect for his ability will be heightened if we briefly consider some of the difficulties which may assail him.

Let us say that he is fairly started on a stag's track; a possible complication may be met if the hound's buck crosses another deer's trail. In short, the dog is thereby afforded an excellent opportunity for mislaying the original find. Some owners of hounds do not make much of such a mistake; but a fastidious hunter will consider his hound guilty and deserving of reprimand if the trailer is lured away from the first track. How difficult it may be to hold this trail is appreciated if one considers that the second track may be much fresher than the first; in such a case the hound is not only called upon to discriminate between the two, but to follow the less inviting one. Is not this something like an actual test of moral character? I have known old hounds that could staidly tread this safe and narrow path; and I have known many that would leave it, especially if a pack were working. A tried hound trailing slowly and alone, with no pace set by a pack and no mob psychology thereof to trouble him, will hold the original scent. If the conflicting slots are of the same relative strength, does not his constancy establish the curious fact that he can distinguish between individual deer? If each animal has its own indi-

viduality and its accompanying aura, the hound's task is not so difficult as might appear. A common dog can trail his master in a crowd of people. Why, then, should not a hound, with his patrician nose, be capable of following his particular deer? That each animal should have its own peculiar aura seems the more likely when we consider that thus members of a family could follow one another with certainty, as they do. And therefore I believe the good hound, at the intersection of trails, says to himself: "Here's a stranger that has just passed; but I must hold to my own deer"—or words to that effect.

Another complication which the hound must meet is the "patchy" trail. The deer may pass over a piece of burned ground, or earth that is very hard and dry. He may—and probably he is very designedly fond of doing this—wade some distance through water. Upon taking a notion to be startled, he may make a few little leaps of twenty or twenty-five feet (I know of one carefully measured jump of a few inches over thirty-two feet). The deer may, in grazing, or purposefully in dodging, leave a great many doubles in his trail. Seldom, indeed, unless hotly pursued, or unless travelling some beaten track, does a deer leave a straight trail. All these irregularities of the nature of the ground and of the deer's movements naturally produce a broken trail. When the good hound strikes a break, his momentum may take him across the hiatus and into the fresh scent beyond. If not, he usually begins to circle, and one of his arcs will soon cross the deer's line of travel.

If the difficulty is with running water, the hound cannot depend on any scent that he will pick up in that. But from very careful observation of hounds and of their behaviour in taking a trail through still water (such as a small pond, a lagoon, or a bayou) I am persuaded to believe that they may get a certain degree of scent from this element. If dampness retains scent, as it assuredly does, why should not still water? And as the tendency of all these classes of odours is to be dissipated by rising and by evaporation, it is reasonable to conjecture that the surface of the quiet water might give off some odour from the deer that the hound is following. However, I do not believe that water, if it hold scent at all, will hold it long.

It is not to be thought that all good hounds are distinguished by the same virtues. One will have a phenomenally cold nose; one will always tell the truth; one will have the ability to follow implacably a single trail; one will be gifted to unravel the snarls in a tangled skein of scent; another will have the bottom to run all day. With such qualities in the pack, both the hunter and the quarry are sure to have an interesting time of it. And not the least pleasure to the sportsman is the study to distinguish the gifts of the different dogs, and the watching with what fidelity to his particular virtue each hound will conduct himself. Soda, perchance, will find the trail; Whisky will follow it longest; Nip and Tuck will cover the breaks; Check and Mate will take care of all doubling; Hammer will snap at a puppy because

he wants to run a fox, and will otherwise give the youngster a training in manners; Trigger will disdain a hotter scent than the one which the pack is working. All this is very human, very appealing—having in it elements of the whimsical, but always the deeper element of mystery; for after all the explanations and conjectures for a hound's excellence have been made, there remains the exciting possibility of something just a little beyond our immediate ken. And this we might as well call sorcery.

IV

STILL-HUNTING SIR RUFFNECK

THE man who likes to take a day off in the autumn to range the woods for the ruffed grouse is not likely to have a bird-dog trained on grouse. Some regular grouse-hunters have such dogs; but the average man who loves the recreation of the woods has not. However, his lack in that respect need be no discouragement to him; indeed, from some points of view it is a positive advantage to have no dog. Even the best dog is noisy in the woods, and thus he puts all game on guard against the approaching hunter; unless the dog be of the best type, his hunting of grouse will be a haphazard matter; unless the country be of a suitable nature, and unless the grouse happen to be in a mood to lie to the dog, there may be great difficulty in securing shots over points. While I do not deny the companionship of a dog in the woods, he is not always desirable. Still-hunting with him is not possible; and it is of still-hunting Sir Ruffneck that I want to speak.

It is a much easier matter to still-hunt the ruffed grouse than it is to still-hunt quail. Indeed, where the cover of fields is heavy, the latter task is impossible. I have heard men say that they could do

it successfully, but I believe they must have had a few pet coveys "gentled" to come to a whistle and to eat out of the hand. When the frost-blackened ragweed is knee-high and the dry foxtail grass has arched over, it is often a hopeless matter to find and to follow quail. Besides, hunting quail without a dog has no advantages. Most men get as much enjoyment out of watching the action of the dogs in the field as they do in tramping the fields and bagging the game. Some must get their sport out of watching the dogs, for they find it impossible to bag the game. But still-hunting the grouse is practicable even for the man whose work does not permit him to become thoroughly acquainted with all the remarkable characteristics of this extraordinary bird.

The ruffed grouse drums at all seasons of the year. This sound is probably a love call and a challenge to rivals. It may be compared to the strutting of the turkey; we know that odd sound that the gobbler emits when at the zenith of his bombastic strut. Sometimes the drum of Sir Ruffneck is, I think, merely an expression of his feeling of lordship over the lesser creature of creation. This is probably what it means in the autumn. This expression of superiority on his part permits man to take a fall out of his pride; for, after a little experience, one can follow the drum, locate the grouse, and probably get a shot at the prince of the woodland as he whirrs off his vine-draped rock or off his ancient mossy log, half-buried in leafmould in the heart of a sequestered thicket.

But while the grouse can be approached if thus located, it is a difficult matter to ascertain the direction from which the drumming comes. On still fall days, when the dropping of a single lazy leaf attracts notice, a grouse may be heard drumming in his soft, dim, throbbing, penetrant way. Is it on this slope of the hill, or across the hollow? Is it down the ridge, or is it up? How far off is he? It is very easy to err in attempting to answer these questions. And on the right answers will depend the success of your hunt. The thing to do is to stand still, listening until you are sure of the direction whence the drumming comes. Then walk a hundred yards in that direction, pausing to hear the drum. When you are sure of your direction, then try to determine the distance. I confess that this is most baffling, especially if the atmosphere is damp, for then the sound will have its natural muffled quality enhanced. But at least the hunter knows that if he keeps on in the right direction he will eventually flush his bird. He should be ready to shoot at any time. While stalking one grouse, he may flush another; or he may flush the one he is after much sooner than he expected. If the drumming ceases, especially if it ends abruptly in the midst of a drum, he may be sure that the bird is probably aware of his approach. Not one man in a hundred can crawl up to a drumming grouse. I do not refer, of course, to the grouse of those regions where the lack of hunters has rendered the birds tame and fearless, but to the alert, sprightly, crafty, elusive grouse of our settled regions, where

for a generation at least sportsmen have roamed the woods.

Of course, a man cannot depend on a grouse to accommodate him by drumming. He must have other ways of locating his game. The most natural of these is by sitting still, looking, listening; moving on after a time, to take up the silent, crafty watch at a different place in the woods. This kind of hunting just suits some men. I remember taking a friend deer-hunting in the South. We rode out to the stands in a wagon. I posted him on a log on the edge of the road. "Stay here," I said, "until we get back. It may be a couple of hours." He subsided amiably on the log. "Just my kind of hunting," he answered. When we returned he was fast asleep.

Where the woods are level, the hunter will have to do his still-hunting at random until he finds a grouse; then he may be able to discover what brought the bird to the particular place. If some attraction in the shape of food is visible, the inference is that more birds are near. The hunter should sit still and wait. The great principle of all still-hunting is to let the hunted rather than the hunter make its presence known. If the bird is an old cock, he may be a wanderer; for in the autumn the old males range erratically, and one may be found miles from a comrade. I once shot a grouse along a creek flowing through a farming community; the mountains, whence he had come, were five miles away.

Where the hunting is done on hillsides, where most grouse-shooting is naturally to be had, the still-

hunter should begin his day by seeking to ascertain whether the grouse are ranging high or low. Though they sometimes are distributed over various altitudes, it often occurs that they frequent the high sides of the ridges, or else are all down near the bottom. It saves a lot of tramping, not to mention disappointment, if the hunter will take time and patience to discover where his birds are feeding and ranging. Then he can spend his day either uphill or downhill, rather than spend it in travelling back and forth in a fruitless search.

The still-hunter of grouse must be a patient man, and he must be one capable of limiting his ambitions. After sitting for several hours, feeling that as they glide by he is losing his chance of bragging to the people at home, he must not be discouraged. He should always go on the principle that to every patient man the chance comes. More than once I have had a very empty morning still-hunting, and a very full and sporty afternoon; indeed, several times I have saved the day after sundown. And what I can do the average hunter can do.

The chances that the still-hunter for grouse has are not limited to the chances of Sir Ruffneck himself. If he is not too exacting in the matter of the kind of game he desires, while sitting quietly on his rock or log, waiting for grouse, he may also be waiting to see a mountain covey of quail, a fox-squirrel, or a gray squirrel come within range; or perhaps a rabbit that another hunter has started will come jumping sedulously along. I have known foxes, wild

turkeys, and even deer to be killed by men who were still-hunting grouse. I take it that while few men like to "kill them all," every man likes to take something home, lest the children think that Dad is a back number, and lest someone else who has been counting on a game dinner will have to rearrange her menu.

Men in the woods will act almost as they do at home; I mean that their natures will betray them or will save them. Whatever you do, try not to be a buffalo in the woods. I have a friend who is a giant of a man; in business, he "butts the bull off the bridge." Unfortunately, he carries his ideas of success into the woods. On a still day he can be heard for miles, tearing through the brush, calling his comrades at the top of his powerful voice, dislodging boulders that go thundering down the mountain, getting all out of breath and "overhet"—to what end? Presumably because he thinks the mere expenditure of energy can win in the game of hunting. Never. Silence, craft, keenness of hearing and vision, patience: these alone bring home the bacon in the game of still-hunting. Don't crack a twig in the woods if you can help it; don't talk above a whisper; don't shout—whistle if you have to signal; don't wind yourself by going too strenuously, for if you do and get a shot you will probably miss. Take the sport calmly, quietly, determinedly. Be an Indian.

Knowing the favourite foods of the grouse in the huntingseason, the still-hunter will naturally frequent these places where the bird's food is found. Grouse,

like quail, feed early and late, and they usually walk to the feeding ground. How often have I sat near a tangle of grapes and greenbriars and heard the hesitant approach of grouse. They usually come singly; they learn early that each individual must take care of itself. At such a time it is not enough for the hunter to make no sound; he must not move his head or his body, for the eye of a wild thing is as quick to detect movement as its ear is to detect sound. He must let the bird come well within distance; then, unless he wants to watch it feed or wants to take a chance on others coming up, he must flush it and shoot. I have no use for the man who will shoot a grouse on a tree or on the ground. He ought to get his recreation in some other way. He kills the bird and the sport at one shot. Some allowance is made, of course, for those who use a .22 rifle. That surely is legitimate, especially if the bird be taken in the head. Anything else is disgraceful.

In bagging the grouse on the wing, much depends on the nature of the bird's rise. The intelligence of the grouse is well known, as is its favourite method of illustrating that intelligence by foiling the sportsman by a baffling rise. Also, if there is a tree to be put between the hunter and the hurrying bird, Sir Ruffneck will put it there. In still-hunting, therefore, the hunter, having located a grouse, should look the situation over carefully; decide where the grouse will go if flushed and where the hunter wants it to go. In short, one of the arts of still-hunting consists

in flushing the bird in a manner that is advantageous to the hunter. Don't flush at random and take a chance; try, at least, to flush craftily, designedly, and make as certain as you can of your shot. Should the bird flush wild, or should you miss, don't guess as to where he will come down. Watch him to the very last glimmer of his wings. Mark him down. Note particularly whether he veers to right or left. The chances are that if his flight is high over sprouts and trees, it will be long and somewhat wild; if through the woods it can usually be followed with considerable accuracy. And always be as tireless in your pursuit of him as you were patient in your waiting for him to come to you.

V

THE MASTER WILDWOOD SPORT

A TRUE hunter of the white-tail will forego every other pleasure on earth for that rarest one of pursuing and taking an old rough-shod, long-flanked, many seasoned buck, whose antlers, as he moves, are likely to make an amateur hunter imagine the woods have suddenly been set in motion.

It was as a lad of nine on a Carolina plantation that I had my first encounter with a buck; and let me add that these first meetings are liable to be concussions. If a man is ever in danger of being attacked by acute mania, it is when his initial stag heads his way. The Negroes in the South have an expression which they apply to any unaccountable and fatal sickness; they call it "the take-off." That is what buck-fever is.

A brief account of this hunt may be in order because it illustrates many of the changes and chances of deer-hunting in general. After all, a wise old stag, find him where you will, is the same wildly intelligent and crafty creature.

The business happened on my home plantation, more than thirty years ago. For a long time I had

been pleading with my father to take me deer-hunting, and when he consented I was almost overcome by my responsibility. I imagined that if I let a deer pass me the end of the world would be a natural and speedy consequence. The weapon with which I was armed was not designed for big game. It was a little single-barrelled shotgun, with no sight, and with a decided bend in the barrel. One day, while crawling after some doves in the cornfield, I had by mischance thrust the muzzle in the earth and, without knowing that it was choked, had fired it, bursting it badly. The plantation blacksmith had filed the end smooth and I had learned, when sighting, to make due allowance for the twist and the list.

As I stood on my first deer-stand, every sight and sound, every flash and shadow that varies the light of the woodland was vividly alive to me. I looked so hard at the drive that the trees in it seemed to come up to me. I saw tiny warblers busily searching in the giant pines for their fairy fare. The towhee hopping about in the thicket edge and rustling the dead leaves, the cautious crows, cawing at me persistently from a safe distance, the insolent sharp-shinned hawk, circling high above the murmuring pines—each in turn caught my attention but failed to hold my interest. I was after deer, but of deer I saw no sign. After a while I heard our skilful Negro driver whistle to the hounds. Soon one hound struck what might have been a mazy fox trail and my heart began a very exalted beating. My eyes were fixed with the utmost intentness on the head of the drive.

Suddenly, three hundred yards away and straight ahead of me, the bay bushes silently parted; there stood a splendid buck, his great antlers towering in the pale winter sunshine. His chest looked shaggy and dark. A moment later the dogs opened in full cry, and the buck, with a single bound, cleared the thicket and headed for me. As he broke cover, he disclosed behind him a smaller deer with peg-horns.

The chorus of the hounds rose high; the cautious crows left their perches and flew away, cawing discordantly. On came the two splendid creatures of the wild, and I was the only obstacle in their path—I and my little twisted gun. My father had warned me never to follow a deer with my gun, but rather to pick an open space between two pines and to pull down the trigger the moment the deer darkened it. It was sound advice to a youngster on a broadside shot. The deer would pass on my right; I levelled my gun on an aperture between two tall rosemary pines. Suddenly the great buck launched himself into the opening. I fired. . . . To my unutterable chagrin, through the wall of smoke that my black powder had thrown up, I descried both bucks serenely continuing their masterful march. The dogs then stormed by me like a living whirlwind. In a few moments the two old deer-hunters, my father and the Negro driver, came dashing up on horseback. I had the keenest desire just then for foreign travel; China seemed to appeal to me.

“Dat’s the grandpa old buck,” the driver said; “I hope you is done darken he eye.”

Though there was not much hope in his voice, he honoured me by dismounting and looking for blood signs. Suddenly he cried out and fell on his knees in the pine straw.

"You hit him!" he cried. Then, because by nature he was more Indian than Negro, he whirled himself on his horse and was gone like a shot after the dogs.

"I can't hear the hounds," Father said. "Son, I believe they have him.

Half a mile from where I had shot we found the buck stone-dead; the hounds were lolling about in self-satisfied triumph. Since that day I have hunted deer more or less continuously and have had some rewards; but the thrill of that moment when we gathered about the fallen monarch has never been approached.

The behaviour of this buck in running, apparently unhurt, for so great a distance constitutes one of the mysteries of all deer-hunting. It is sometimes possible to tell when a deer is struck, but often it is not. Some hunters claim that if a deer slaps down his tail at the crack of the gun or of the rifle he is reached; but on a good many occasions I had seen mortally wounded deer sail off in grand and standard style. Some of these were actually shot through the heart. In more than one instance I have myself seen deer run with normal grace and vigour for a distance of a hundred yards, though shot clear through the heart. If a deer blunders when you fire, the chances are that you have spoken the message to him. Some

hunters say that if he changes his step he is struck.

I once was told by my brother of a curious experience he had with a master buck. Seven deer came out to him, and it was necessary for him to do some selecting. First, of course, he chose the old herd-buck, or what the English call the hart-royal. The open barrel accounted for him; the choke barrel took care of a forky-horn as the herd swept wildly past through the broom-grass of the level pineland. But at the second barrel the old man of the forest recovered himself. He got up off the ground and made a run of some fifty yards, putting a distance of a hundred yards between himself and my brother. Though he was completely crippled, he managed to keep that distance until he reached water. This he swam, and thus he escaped. However, a week later he was found by a Negro, who brought my brother his magnificent antlers.

The point of the story, however, is this: as the buck was making off painfully he had his tail pressed in tight against his haunches, and at every effort the tip of it would be flicked like that of a goat. Both my brother and I were of the opinion that such a tail-motion was an infallible sign of a serious, probably mortal, wound.

It often happens that a deer, when shot at, will stop; but he will not stop thus if he is hit. I knew a deer to come out to a green stander and actually pose on a little hillock in front of him. At the first barrel the deer simply wheeled around, presenting the other broadside. Of course, I am not saying that

all deer are so considerate of the amateur hunter. It also happens that when two deer are running together and one is shot down the other may stop within a short distance, waiting for its comrade. Some hunters are deceived by this matter into believing that the one shot has killed one deer and crippled the second. If, after being shot at, deer separate, the chances are that one has been hit. Yet I have seen two beautiful old bucks run together for half an hour and then decide to separate, probably thinking such a manœuvre a puzzler for the hounds.

What I have said concerning the effect of shot upon deer and their remarkable capacity for carrying, sometimes, a deadly wound without showing it applies particularly to buckshot. Even a hunter ought to be truthful, and I admit that I have not hunted deer much with a rifle. In fact, there is a distinct tendency nowadays to return to the shotgun for deer. Massachusetts and New Jersey demand it; throughout the South the shotgun is used because of the level nature of the country and because the woods and swamps are so dense that shots really out of gunshot range are not often afforded. There is strong sentiment in Pennsylvania now for a law insisting upon the shotgun. I believe that no State would lose by its adoption; it certainly is, for man, a less deadly weapon than the high-power rifle; and for deer it is sufficiently hard-hitting. The popular theory that a shotgun is too light for deer is unsound. A long-barrelled gun properly loaded will handle the biggest buck if the distance is at all reasonable and

if the aim of the hunter is decent. But regarding the rifle, I must add that many friends of mine who use it for deer tell me that, while they can usually discern, on account of the bullet's heavy shocking power, whether a deer has been struck, there is always the possibility that a deer will carry a rifle wound with apparently as much unconcern as he bears away a wound from a shotgun.

But this discussion of wounds and the like ought to be closed with something like a summary. What may be considered the most vulnerable parts of a deer? This is usually the list, arranged according to relative importance: the brain, the neck, the heart, the paunch. Many an old deer-hunter has expressed to me the belief that, after a fatal head wound, a wound in the neck is most liable to bring down a deer. The old saying, "Get it in the neck," with all that it implies, is very true. A heart wound, of course, is going to prove fatal, yet a deer may actually escape with it. Most deer which get away to die, or which are overhauled after long chases, are either wounded in the paunch or else have a broken leg.

I once had a remarkable experience of this nature. A very fine stag, a ten-pointer, was started and he came within about fifty yards of a stander. He fired, and the deer went on; but I, being on the next stand and watching the whole performance intently, saw the deer's right foreleg fly up. We therefore let the hounds follow the buck, which they did in grand style, sweeping a long curve of more than

three miles. So hot was the pace and so well did the stag keep his distance that I began to doubt whether my eyes had played me true. However, he at last bore for the river; then I knew that he probably had been wounded.

We followed fast, but the chase was so far ahead that we knew the deer would take the water before we came within sight. Yet when we came near the river we heard the pack baying. It seemed to me remarkable that the dogs should bay on the brink of deep-flowing water beyond which lay safety for the deer. Yet when we came up, that was exactly what was happening. It seems that as the wounded buck had taken the tide he had had to swim under a few bushes, and down among these a huge grapevine was draped in long folds. It was suspended from a giant cypress that stood on the bank. In his haste and distraction the buck let a loop of the vine catch his horns fairly about the brows. Behind him on the bank were the hounds, informing him that they had come to call. Every time the buck would swim out a certain distance the tightened vine would draw him back; then again his manœuvre would be repeated. It was a wild and a pathetic sight. Of course, we quickly put the fine old creature out of his struggles. The horns of that stag are now in my collection; and the savage rubbing of the grapevine on the bearing just below the brow tines is plainly discernible. To us he has always been known as "the grapevine buck."

In discussing deer-hunting as a sport it seems to

me that we must never lose sight of the fact that its interest is due chiefly to the nature of the game pursued. I have, for instance, no ambition to hunt wallabys, and my interest in groundhogs is tenuous. But I hope to be a stag-follower as long as I can see a sight. This feeling I attribute to the character of the deer—that noble, elusive, crafty, wonderful denizen of the wilds, the pursuit of which is surely the master sport of the huntsman. These things being true, it will not be amiss to examine somewhat closely the habits of the animal, for such an examination will not only be interesting, but it may lead to better hunting. Assuredly the poorest deer-hunter is always the man who knows least about the deer. And other things being equal, he who really knows the deer and his ways will be surest to prosper in his pursuit.

I think there is no other creature so large which lives so silently, secretively, and effacingly. Many a time deer will live close to settlements, yet their presence may for a long time be unguessed. They are by no means shy of noises when they understand them. I remember well with what misgivings I once saw a sawmill erected near the end of one of my favourite deer-drives. Yet, despite all the howling of the mill, the shouting of the teamsters, the hammering and pounding about the mill yard, the deer soon became accustomed to the racket. About two months after this particular mill was established I started as many deer as usual in its vicinity; one old stag I bounced out of the bays not more than a hun-

dred yards from the mill. I once knew of a herd of about seven deer that lived in a strip of woods between two settlements and they fattened on the crops of both communities. All this proves that the white-tail is a remarkable skulker. More deer escape enemies by skulking than by running. In fact, a deer does not readily run and jump. It can and will; but if left alone, it will just steal along noiselessly, push its way cautiously through bushes, float lightly over obstacles, wander delicately through the lonely night forest.

In most cases, unless hard pushed, a deer will run under an obstacle where possible in preference to leaping it. I have repeatedly seen deer run under a strand of barbed wire not more than two and a half feet off the ground, and have observed them do the same thing under a hurricane-thrown log. Of course, sometimes the grand show or main circus comes off: a deer will set sail (the Negroes of the plantation say "ca' sail," meaning carry sail), that white banner will be stiffly erected, and of all the running and jumping you ever saw in your life, a genuinely startled buck or doe will show it to you. Occasionally a deer when first started—and this applies especially to a wise old stag—will take one tremendous leap, as if to get his bearing for an elevation. I have seen this done but twice, and I have seen hundreds of deer start from their beds. Some hunters claim that it is a special manœuvre. I have never been able to decide whether it is that or merely a major reaction from a man-size scare. Whatever it may be, it is

one of those sights that is genuinely memorable among woodland pictures.

Of a deer's behaviour before being started from its bed I can give some idea from personal observation. A white-tail, especially an old buck, may lie very close if he thinks he may be passed over. I remember seeing one lying far under a dense canopy of vines and bushes, with the late afternoon sun streaming in full upon it. This buck was not bedded but was lying flat on sandy black loam. His head was laid close along his flank. He didn't look to me larger than a fawn. He must have seen me, but he probably concluded that my chances of seeing him were poor. Later, after he had been started, and after I had had opportunity to examine him closely, he proved to be a full-grown stag of fine proportions.

On another occasion, while walking to my stand through comparatively open woods, my attention was attracted to some movement under certain oak bushes to which the dead leaves were still clinging. There lay a ten-point stag; he wasn't lying normally, but was crouched, as a dog often lies, with his feet extended in front of him. His head was flat on the ground. This he turned slightly to keep a wary eye on my approach. It was the rocking of his horns that I had seen. Had I not seen him, he probably would have let me pass, and then he would have slunk away on my backtrack. Before jumping, a deer often assumes this crouching position if it is aware of the approach of an enemy; and that is certainly one reason why it can make amazingly long

leaps apparently out of its bed. It does jump from its bed, but it is all set for the performance.

Once again I saw two old does crouching in the manner just described, but they had half risen and appeared to be undecided whether to go or stay. I passed them just to see what would happen. They simply subsided into their beds again. A doe always appears more unsuspicious and unwary than a buck; in such a case a stag would probably have left the neighbourhood.

After a deer is out of its bed, its behaviour is usually characteristic. For a short distance it may make a mighty show of record-breaking running, dauntless tail flaunting high, and may give all other signals of a last and long farewell to the hunter. But don't let that deer fool you. He is only showing off. In the first place, he has a definite range, which is moderate in size, and he hates to leave this. Again, he would much rather skulk than run. How far he will go will depend on how badly he is frightened, and also on what kind of cover is afforded near by. Many a time I have known a deer to stop within two hundred yards of his bed whence he had been started. After stopping he is going to stand and look about for a while—possibly a good while. Then he will creep and mosie his way into some snug thickety corner; and when he considers that your memory of him has failed, he will lie down again and finish chewing his cud. Occasionally, when a deer is started, he will slip out craftily, stealing on his silent Cinderella feet to the thicket edge; once there, he

will give things the once-over in order to plan his campaign of escape. In such a case, a deer is liable to double or to run back through the drivers. I once saw a large buck suddenly appear like an apparition at the head of a drive. Then, with extraordinary skill, he simply effaced himself. He sank craftily in the bushes, and I didn't see them move again. Later, when we picked up his track, we found that he had turned tail and slunk out between the oncoming hounds and the drivers. Count on a deer to do a thing as daring and as intelligent as that, if he considers that he has to do it.

The habit of the white-tail to skulk has been his salvation. He is the greatest dodger, considering his size, of all animals. In this respect he is remarkably like the cotton-tail; and the behaviour of these two wild creatures may well be compared. A rabbit makes a mighty show of speed when started, but he doesn't go far ere he resorts to other tactics. So does a deer. A rabbit will finally come back near the place where he was jumped. A deer will likely do the same thing. Both are lovers of narrow ranges. Indeed, I consider them remarkably alike, even in their feeding.

Our friend the deer is hunted in almost every state in the Union; and various are the ways of taking him. Conditions of locality determine what method is best. To do as the natives do is a safe rule. But wherever he may be found, whether in the Florida Everglades, the Carolina swamps, the wild mountains of Carolina or Pennsylvania, the Adirondacks,

Maine, the Michigan peninsula, Wisconsin, Texas, California—always and everywhere he is the same creature. When you say a deer is a deer, you've said it. And to follow the deer successfully a man must put himself out to study understandingly this amazingly swift, elusive, beautiful, crafty, appealing, almost magic creature of our North American wilds. Had he a coat-of-arms, it would bear the symbols of lonely lakes, silent mountains, laurelled dusky gorges, mazy thickets of tamarack, gloomy cypress swamps, wild sweet woods of birch and hemlock, reedy morasses, solitary brakes. And over the top of the escutcheon there should be a star. For the deer is of the night, and he most adequately expresses to us the mystery of the darkness and the loneliness and the strange beauty of the night.

VI

DWELLERS IN THE SANCTUARY

THE dew-hung grasses, the shimmering low copses of huckleberry, the tall tree-bays, the towering pines—all these were held in a shining hush. There had been a shower a short time before, but no wind had accompanied it; and now the warm midwinter sun of the South was rising on a silent glimmering world—aromatic, hale, deliciously fresh, delicately fragrant. And the gleaming peace of it all had a profound meaning for me, because I was in the very heart of a great game sanctuary; and the owner, an old friend, had given me the privilege of wandering through it at will, making such observations of wild life as might be possible.

On one side of this sanctuary is an apparently boundless sea marsh, eerie and melancholy; on another side, the far-reaching estate of a hunting club; on the other two sides are forest more or less free of access to every poacher, pot-hunter, prowler, and other land-cruisers of low degree with which most "free land" is infested. But this sanctuary, almost surrounded by hunters though it was, was a genuine refuge. More than a thousand acres of pineland, deep tupelo swamp, and dense shrubberies had been

closely fenced off; and hither, as I was soon to learn, eagerly and intelligently thronged the harried, the hunted, the stalked, the pursued.

It was strange that the first distinct sound I heard was the far music of a pack of hounds; they were northward from the sanctuary. Deer-hunters had evidently made a daybreak start, and their dogs had struck a fresh trail. As lately I had heard local hunters bitterly complain that every deer started in the open woods had a habit of making straight for the refuge, I rather anticipated a visit from the fugitive now in flight before the hounds. Standing beside a pond cypress whose broad-based roots gave me easy dry footing, I awaited my early-morning caller. Nor was my waiting long. Perhaps two hundred yards away the deer first became visible. It was a full-antlered stag, making his way with desperate speed into what he knew to be inviolate country.

The buck's course would bring him within fifty yards of me; and, being a hunter, I confess that my trigger finger tingled suspiciously when I measured with an envious eye the tall and massive chestnut-coloured antlers. But even a hunter can have a heart; and on this day I was a watcher rather than a destroyer. The stag was running perhaps a full mile ahead of the dogs, and, as is nearly always true, he was not much inconvenienced by the tumult at his heels. A deer is seldom actually pushed by hounds unless he is wounded; he is so expert at skulking and dodging, at crossing water and at running down long

lengths of it, at deftly slipping through apparently impassable thickets, and at doing all other elusive and baffling things, that hounds never really trouble him much. But this deer appeared urgently bent on reaching the refuge. Breasting the bright broom-sedge, rocking lithely over fallen timber, flashing through patches of rainwater, on he came—the very spirit of all that is wildest in the far wastelands, in the grim smouldering swamp, in the weird and forbidding sea marsh. He seemed a splendid palpitation out of the silent forest's great wild heart. Airily he leaped the fence; and as if by magic his pace slackened. He knew he was safe. By the time he was opposite me he stopped. His regal head high, turned toward his pursuers, he breasted the cool morning air, and from his black-ringed nostrils his breath was suspired smokily, defiantly.

Suddenly he swung his head with jaunty grace, facing front once more; he lolled his great antlers, lowering his head until his nose snuffed the dew-drenched grass. Then warily he stepped forward, insinuated himself into a thicket where smilax rioted in triumph over bays and myrtles, and was lost in the silent fastness of this sweet haunt.

About ten minutes later the hounds came in view; I meanwhile had advanced to meet them. When they discovered me standing by the wire of the sanctuary, they acquired a sudden distaste for following the buck; and even I felt impressed by what, from their behaviour, I had to believe must be the viciousness of my appearance. Hounds, meeting a stranger

in the woods, usually show discretion; and this is especially true if they sense that they are running on land where deer have safe harbourage. Dogs soon learn, as well as deer, what a sanctuary means. That night, I know, certain deer-hunters recounted the story of how a mighty stag had escaped them; but their tale lacked an element that their dogs might have supplied: that of their singular encounter with the menacing stranger who turned them back just as they thought that they were wearing down their quarry.

The owner of this noble tract of protected country had told me of a certain level reach of pineland, underbedded with heavy broom-sedge, gallberry bushes, patches of low myrtles, and small copses of huckleberry, where, he said, many bucks harboured during the day. This place I now found; and it presented a most unusual chance for observation. The big pines were but sparsely set here, and none of the undergrowth was much over knee-high. On every side the wild woodland, brightly open and sunny, stretched away into glimmering distance, I could see down far vistas retiring mistily among the pines. And through this sweet wilderness I wandered slowly, drinking in the mellow sunshine, the winy exhalations from the earth, the soft, mysterious beauty of the lone and peaceful landscape. All was silence; not even in the murmurous pines had the morning air begun to stir. All was tranced and mystical. This place was indeed a sanctuary.

A certain tiny pond attracted me; one cypress

stood in it, myrtles fringed its borders; its area was not larger than a city flat. In such a place a deer loves to lie. Instinct tells him that he ought to cross water before couching himself for the day; he knows also that if he is roused a getaway through water will throw the pursuers off the track. He also, I think, loves the cool and grateful sense of water near and the gleaming radiance that it reflects. I believe that wild creatures have a sense of enjoyment of these things; they probably love life as much as we do, and environment is, or can be, a source of pleasure. I have watched deer pacing a sea beach for hours; they did not feed, they did not drink; they merely seemed to be enjoying the wild grandeur of the surf, the storm of whose rolling anthems gave to the beach and the dunes what Emerson called "tumultuous privacy."

Close to the cypress-sentinelled pond I now came; and when within twenty steps of it, out of its farther borders suddenly burst two deer. They had heard me, possibly they had winded me; but, as I now stood motionless, they had not located me. Two bucks they were, as alike as twins, save that one's rack was dark and craggy and the other's graceful and tall and gray. Upon clearing the bushes they halted momentarily, the very picture of poised alertness—powerful, wild, matchless in speed and sagacity. But the concert of action that I expected did not come; a radical divergence of opinion suddenly developed. For a thrilling and flashing moment they hesitated; then they broke apart. The dark-antlered stag headed

for the dim swamp looming eastward; the gray-antlered one leaped almost straight for me, dashed within three yards of where I stood, and fled westward into a far recess of the sanctuary. I mounted a fallen log and watched them go. The sunlight glinted on their horns and gleamed warmly on their coats; in two or three minutes from the time they jumped from their beds they were lost to sight; yet, for me at least, to memory they will never be lost. As a hunter, I know the piercing thrill of walking up two bucks and of bringing them to bag; but this business of walking up stags in a sanctuary and of watching them escape has its compensations also. It is really something fairly to stalk and to take an old, many-seasoned, lean-flanked, crafty buck; but it is something also to see the heart of the beautiful lonely woods, and to leave it beautiful and unbroken.

While I was still standing on the fallen log a tell-tale waving of the broom-sedge caught my attention. Trotting along thoughtfully came an old gray fox, returning, no doubt, from a thieving visit of some kind. As he stole along through the grass and bushes I was impressed with the extraordinary dryness and fluffiness of his coat and of his brush, although he was going, and had gone, through the wettest kind of underbrush. A sparrow flew out of the grass beside the fox; the wily creature paused, his face sharpening perceptibly; he actually seemed to be on a point; indeed, his stand was more steady than that of many a wild bird-dog I have known. In another moment he moved silently, almost eerily,

onward. I take it that no animal of his size moves more silently than the fox; yet I believe that the deer, when he is not alarmed into flight, is every whit as silent. Indeed, as one observes closely these dwellers in the wastelands one is impressed by the quietness of them, the ease of their movements, the gracefulness of their carriage and their behaviour, and the poignant appeal of their pathetic timidity, their high intelligence, their almost human perceptions, motives, fears, and affections.

Onward through the level pineland I took my way. Out of a canopied clump of fragrant myrtles I jumped another stag—a strange old fellow who had dropped one horn, and who, as he sailed away thus dishevelled, had an appearance curiously unreal. But the apparent splendour of his running belied any thought that was fantastic in aught but his looks. Not a half-mile farther on a great woodland sight was afforded me. It is not often in these days that even a man who spends much of his time in the wilds is privileged such a scene. I was near the gloomy tupelo swamp; the sun was now steaming off the bushes and the trees, so that a rosy mist hung draped along the edges of the swamp like mantillas of soft lace. Immediately before me at this moment was a group of young pines, broadcrested and stunted, their dense greenery forming a lustral canopy under which the sun's warm rays were wanly stealing. A deer will lie down where the sunshine can strike him; but he likes shelter also and seclusion. For his daily long siesta give a deer sunny sequestration.

For a moment I paused to look at these pines and to look over them—they were not more than four feet high. Suddenly from under there three great shapes stole, one after the other, silent, shadowy, haunting. It was as if the Seminoles had returned to this region which once was home to them, and as if three of their craftiest warriors were stealing forth on the warpath. But then I saw horns. The deer cleared the thicket! three old stags they were, ancient wary dwellers in the sanctuary, heroes, I knew, of many a long race in the pinelands beyond the solitary refuge. In the morning mist they stood, their heads regally high. I did not move, and apparently they did not see me. From many years of observation I have concluded that the eyesight of most wild animals is tremendously keen and far-visioned to catch movement; but it often fails to recognize a person or an object when it is motionless. We, too, have eyes of the same kind in that we readily detect a moving thing, but are inclined to pass over one that is stationary. Many a time I have had deer, foxes, and turkeys pass within a few feet of me while I was standing or sitting quietly, whereas the slightest movement might have alarmed them while they were still a good way off. Old deer-hunters always advise an amateur to stand in front of a tree rather than behind it; for if he is behind it, he will be dodging back and forth to see what is heading his way, and the oncoming deer will inevitably see him.

Two of the waiting bucks tossed their heads in

graceful challenge. They could see no enemy. They had heard one approach, and they had left their beds; but now they were wondering if the thing had been a false alarm. I stepped forward, and simultaneously they launched their beautiful forms lithely down the misty edge of the tupelo swamp. Like wraiths they vanished far down the darksome border of the gloomy watercourse. From safety they had gone into safety; magnificent creatures of the wilds on whose gallant slot there was no pursuit.

As these observations on deer were made during the close of the mating season, it was not surprising that bucks alone should have been seen. After the mating the does leave the bucks and usually retire deep into big thickets and shrubberies; the bucks consort, soon drop their antlers, and do not make a rule of rejoining the does until some time during the following summer.

While walking down the margin of the swamp I heard a splashing in a pond to my right and then a great whirring of wings. Out over my head came a flock of gorgeous wood-ducks, twenty-five or thirty in number. They had probably not been startled, but were merely "changing ponds," or passing from one part of the sanctuary to another. It did me good to see these ducks, because a few years ago they were on the verge of extermination. Now a nationwide law protects them, and they have reappeared in great numbers.

A morning wind was now softly crooning in the pine crests—a sea wind, drowsy but insistent. In

season's rearing, left the watching to their elders. They clumped about in the water, made little excursions to the shore, and gave the impression of being a very happy and industrious family. Within five minutes the flock passed over the causeway, entered a myrtle thicket, and were gone.

I was glad that they had been seen in the water, for it is in the wild turkey's nature to love water. He walks in it much, feeds in it a good deal, and he loves to range along its margins. In our country, when turkeys vanish from the pinelands, it is a safe guess that they have gone to the swamp. Such a place is rich in natural foods; besides, running water always has the exciting promise of all kinds of good things to eat drifted down and floated up, and perhaps stranded on bars or shores.

From the great watercourse where grew the tupelos I struck through the thickets toward the sea marshes. I love the lone and melancholy aspect of these waste morasses; and here wild life is abundant. Here gather vast concourses of wild fowl; here dwell the shore birds; to these creeks and quiet banks will pace raccoons for their favourite food, the oyster; and here will deer, run out of the woods by hounds, come for safety. Here, too, come I—a schoolboy to one of nature's mighty classrooms.

Emerging on the beach, I see that the tide is out, and that the willets, the oyster-catchers, the sandpipers, the cranes and herons, are all scattered over the banks which have been exposed by the tide. For four miles the marsh extends before me—a mighty

sweep of level, reed-hung, lonesome, and almost inviolate country. Over it now are circling flocks of wild ducks. They have come from their feeding grounds far up the Santee and are here looking for daytime drowsing places. No place in the world could for them be more inviting; they have sunshine, silence, seclusion; marsh-bordered ponds brimmed by shallow tepid water, warm sequestered creeks, lee shores on which to preen themselves, loaf, and invite their souls. The black duck is here, and the gorgeous mallard, the widgeon and the sporty swift teal, the shoveller and the ruddy. If the vast marshland before me could be suddenly alarmed, out of it would spring thousands upon thousands of wild fowl, myriads of happy and beautiful creatures, to testify that their survival has been due to the sanctuary. But as it is, I merely see small groups here and there beating their way intently over the marsh or dropping with soft, contented cries into warm tiny lakes and languorous creeks.

While watching the marsh a movement a little way down the beach attracts my attention: a doe timidly minces out upon the sand, gazes thoughtfully out over the marsh, trips runningly down to a green tuft of marsh, which she crops eagerly; then she returns to her bed in the sparkleberry thicket. Over the marsh a lordly eagle wheels; and at his coming many wild fowl rise and flee precipitately. We cannot afford them sanctuary from his tyranny. But he disappears toward a barrier island, and once more a sunny silence—that is so apparent that I can hear it—

steeps the magic beauty of the wide marsh, the curving beach, the purple wall of the pine forest.

Back into the wildwoods I turn; for I have a half-day of delight ahead in studying the denizens of this great refuge. I will not take you with me, because I know that I am a really quite hopeless enthusiast on matters of this nature, and you probably have another engagement for the afternoon. Yet at least you have had glimpses, as lifelike as I could give them, of certain fascinating dwellers in the sanctuary.

For these children of the wild every man, even though he may be a hunter, should have something like a sanctuary in his heart; for out of it, in this as in all things, are the issues of life and death.

VII

THE DEER OF THE COASTAL ISLANDS

OFF the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, at distances varying from one to ten miles, there lie certain islands which were once undoubtedly a part of the mainland; possibly some of these have been built up upon sand reefs. At any rate, they are now genuine islands, with deep shrubberies, tall virgin timber, and little rolling glades in their woodlands where lush grass grows abundantly. The chief of these are Murphy's Island, Bull's Island, Long Island, Sullivan's Island, James Island, Kiawah Island, and St. Katherine's Island. These names by no means exhaust the list; but they will serve very well the purpose of this article, which is to give an account of the nature and the habits of the white-tail deer inhabiting these remote—we might say exclusive—solitudes.

In some instances a coastal barrier island will be cut off from the mainland by narrow salt creeks and wide sea marshes. From such islands deer constantly cross to the mainland. Usually these wanderers return ere long; and if hunted, they make straight for the marshes, which they traverse with ease, swim-

ming the creeks and regaining in an incredibly short time their home haunts.

I have known a crafty old island buck to enter a salt creek and swim, not across it, but a few hundred yards along its length, presumably to throw the following hounds off his trail. At least I give the wily old fellow full credit for his supposed intelligence. When deer on the islands are hunted, they are loth to leave. When hard pressed, the older bucks have a most peculiar custom of escape: this is, to enter the surf and wade out in it for a hundred yards or more, standing in the water with nothing but their heads showing. The fall of the beach is exceedingly gentle, so that they are able to go out a considerable distance without being beyond depth. In the surf these bucks will sometimes remain hours. One famous old stag of Bull's Island was known never to return until the rising tide with a heavy surf drove him in, or until darkness fell.

On the islands which lie decidedly offshore, like St. Katherine's, the deer are born, live, and die in their isolated habitat. This fact undoubtedly has something to do with the deterioration of the stock; for the deer on this particular island are not very heavy or rugged, and their antlers are rather slender and of inferior size. On the other hand, I have a set of antlers taken from a stag of Murphy's Island, which is separated from the mainland only by Blake's Marsh and Alligator Creek, which are remarkably massive and splendid. They were from a buck that was found dead among his native sand dunes. One

of the watchmen of the island, who gave me the horns, said, in describing the incident of his coming upon the body of the stag: "He looked so natural I thought it was a picture. . . . There was nothing to show what had killed him, and he had been dead but a short time."

Deer are not the only wild inhabitants of these islands. On some of them there are wild cattle and wild goats, not to mention those innumerable lesser forms of life such as wildcats, raccoons, and other predatory creatures, and the myriads of wildfowl that find in the land-locked lagoons and brackish ponds ideal resorts for the winter. With the wild cattle the deer range somewhat freely; at least, they are seen together, and there appears to be no particular enmity. I imagine, however, that in the running season a mature buck may challenge a bull to a fight for the championship of the island. My experience with deer has led me to the conclusion that in the mating season a buck can hardly be made to fear even buckshot; what, then, is a little thing like a thousand-pound bull? The deer consort constantly with the wild goats; nor is this strange, for they belong to the same family. I have authenticated at least one instance of interbreeding between goat and deer. The hybrid resulting had the head and body of a deer, but unmistakably the feet and legs of a goat. This creature was taken on the mainland within a few miles of Murphy's Island.

Most of these islands are now game preserves, but on few of them is deer-hunting engaged in. This is

probably on account of the fact that there is easier deer-hunting on the adjacent mainland, and also because these islands are among the finest duck-shooting places in America. Since private hands have taken them over, the deer have increased marvelously. The largest herd of white-tail deer of which I have a genuine record numbered twenty-six; and these were on the mainland, in the pine woods. But a high water was in the rivers at the time; and undoubtedly some of them had been forced to swim out of the deep river swamps, and consorted temporarily in their exile. On the better coastal islands it is no uncommon thing to see considerable herds of deer; and most of these beautiful creatures lack the almost pitiful wildness of the white-tail of hunted country.

While it would be an exceedingly difficult matter even to estimate the probable number of deer on one of these islands, the number is undeniably very large. Concrete proof of this is not lacking. Joel Raybourne, one of the keepers on Murphy's, during two seasons collected more than two sugar-barrels full of dropped antlers; and practically all of these came from under a series of scrubby live-oak trees to which the bucks resorted at the shedding time! It seemed that the larger bucks only claimed these shedding places for theirs; and therefore the gathered antlers in question do not take into account the younger bucks, nor of course the does. I know few things about our wild life that give me more satisfaction than knowing that our big game can increase when

given anything like a chance. Here is clear proof of the matter.

On some of the smaller islands there are very few deer; for example, Capers and Dewees islands, that formerly were well stocked, have been so torn and inundated and almost obliterated by West Indian hurricanes that the deer have either been destroyed or else have decamped to the mainland or to adjacent islands. During the '70's and '80's a heard of albino deer, about ten in number, inhabited Dewees Island. Several of these were killed; one is now in the Charleston Museum. Now there have appeared white deer on Bull's Island, which lies next to Dewees. Undoubtedly these migrated from the latter place. The albino doe in the Museum of Natural History in New York was shot on Bull's Island not long ago. This fine preserve is the property of the Hon. Francis Burton Harrison, late Governor-General of the Philippine Islands.

In some of the salty estuaries and creeks that wind past these islands and penetrate them in some places there are to be found a good many alligators. These grim saurians appear to thrive in brackish and salt water as well as in their native fresh water. Some sportsmen believe that these monstrous reptiles take heavy toll of deer, especially of fawns and yearling does. My belief is to the contrary. I have never known an alligator to kill a deer; and repeatedly I have seen deer swim across alligator-infested waters, where the dog that followed the deer had not a chance. In opening alligators, I have never found

the remains of deer. It seems probable that the deer may be generally immune from attack by these marauders—possibly because of the deer's somewhat savage defense powers, possibly for other reasons. I do not say that such attacks are not made; but in the region I have in mind, the alligator is certainly no decided menace to the deer.

On the coastal islands the food of the deer consists of much browsing on bushes, and on such grass as the woody glades afford. Deer share with wild cattle their fondness for the salt marsh on which they thrive. Acorns from the live-oaks they relish, and the hard fruit of the co-called "alligator acorn" plant—an aquatic growth. Lush grasses and reeds border the many ponds, and these green growths supply additional food. Considering the condition of all the large animals of these islands, it is evident that they never suffer from a lack of food. Even in the winter they are well supplied, for growth hardly ceases, and snow is practically unknown.

Those who know deer are familiar with the roaming habits of the white-tail, and their fondness for open spaces in the woods, such as an old charcoal hearth or the site of a yard. On these islands the deer love to roam the sand dunes; and they, as did Napoleon, like to "gaze out over the sad and solemn sea"—though how sad and solemn it is to them I am not prepared to say. They invariably prefer the front beach to the back beach, even in the winter, for adjacent to the ocean they have a freer air, the recesses of the dunes to shelter them, and a more



The most elusive and beautiful creature of our North American wilds.
Courtesy of "Field and Stream"

breezy atmosphere. During stormy days they retire into the darksome thickets of the islands—thickets made gloomy by prodigious growths of red cedar, huge, man-bodied vines, and dense areas of scrub palmettos. The hunter who ventures into such a place must have his nerve with him, for likely as not he will tramp on a rattlesnake, which is one outdoor experience that all of us would be willing to forego. When roused from such thickets by hounds or by hunters, the deer will be more likely to dodge about than they will be to run a straight course; indeed, coastal island deer carry the white-tail's skulking ability to its limit. They have to. Nor is there better cover in the world for this kind of manœuvring than scrub palmettos and bushy red cedars. Plentiful as are the deer of coastal islands, it is not very easy to kill one. Stalking them on the dunes at dusk or dawn is really the surest as well as the most sportsmanlike method to be employed.

An unusual opportunity is presented on these barrier islands for the study of the life of the white-tail. The deer are in their native state, yet they are so limited in their range that they can frequently be observed. They acquire, it is true, certain habits that are unique, such as entering the surf; but all of the higher animals resort to methods of escape which are best suited to the character of the country in which they are found. A mainland deer when pursued will usually go deep into the heart of an inaccessible swamp; a swamp deer will make for the first body of water and swim it; other deer harbour in canebrakes;

deer of the mountains appear to know the routes that hunters will find most difficult to follow. In short, the habits of deer fundamentally are the same, but certain ones are acquired; and the differences of these merely show the deer's mental capacity. If all deer acted the same way everywhere under identical circumstances, all would be killed in a season or two. It is their resourcefulness that accounts for their survival.

As far as I can see, the deer of the islands described are in a fortunate situation. They have sufficient range, an abundance of good food at all seasons, and they are little hunted. The islands are at present in good hands. The isolation of these preserves insures them against some of the contagious troubles that sweep the mainland. I have several times known the pine woods to suffer irreparable loss in deer from the black-tongue when the coastal islands had not a case. Though the average man has not the privilege of hunting on these islands, he can, if he is a true-hearted sportsman, rejoice that there remain places in our country where wild life is still as abundant as it was many centuries ago.

VIII

THE UNBELIEVABLE

THE thing happened last year on September 14th, and not far north of Charleston. Two bucks had been jumped by a party of deer-hunters. One of these, a regular old man of the woods, was brought down by one of the men of the party. The other, a spike-buck, dismayed by the dogs, the sound of the gun, and the sudden disappearance of his comrade, instead of crossing the road and escaping into the swamp, took down the road toward a stand occupied by Edgar Culler. When he saw the creature coming his way, the hunter was seized with violent chills, fever, and mania. He threw down his gun, ran for the deer, jumped on it, locking his arms around it, and bore it to the ground. There he held it until the other men of his party came up. I call that manœuvring. And it makes a man wonder why we take guns and rifles after deer when we can just run up to a buck and handle him with a half-Nelson or a crotch-hold.

And here is another story; but the joke's not on the deer. Near Wambaw Swamp there had been seen an albino buck of noble proportions. He was the Babe Ruth of the Big Timber. Every time the enemy got

after him, he hit a home run. Finally one of those regular go-get-him parties of hunters went out for his hide, antlers, venison, etc. It was early in the morning, and a misty morning at that. The men were in the grim mood of professionals. One at least knew the ground very well, for the land on which they were hunting belonged to one of the scouting party. The atmosphere of the whole business was tense and serious; you know how men feel when they are gunning for some master mind that has outwitted all other local sportsmen. Well, in the very first drive, which happened to be near an old pasture—a drive in which the fabled white stag was said to be wont to roam—the hounds started a huge wild creature. It crashed off through the bays, heading straight for one of the standers! It was snowy white! Tall were its antlers. Wonderful was its beauty.

In about five minutes the whole thing was over.

"Ned," said the owner of the place, to his friend who had fired the fatal shot, "that was the best mule I had on the place. What made you think it was a buck?"

"The mist," Ned replied, "and his white coat; besides, his ears held up high looked just like horns."

"All I can say," muttered another member of the disgruntled party, "is that the only difference I can see between a jackass and a mule is that one's alive and the other's dead."

And this is about a dog. I don't like to trumpet any dog's ability too highly. I can blow a hunting-horn, but I don't care much about this song-of-praise

business. As for musical ability, my talent is about limited to practice on the shoehorn. But this dog did an astonishing thing. You know, long, long ago, in the good old julep days, a man hunting quail would sometimes actually leave the hunting field before sundown. There would be tinkling glasses, fragrant sprays of mint, water, sugar, and the rest. On one particular afternoon, which had been hot, I turned homeward ere the sun had commenced to set fire to the tops of the tallest pines. I left my dog making game-motions in an old cottonfield and near a wild-plum thicket in the field. I thought he winded quail, but I was thirsty. I came to the plantation house. Then followed a late dinner, after which I sallied forth again. The sun was now setting. I called my dog to give him his dinner. But there was no dog. Then my mind reverted to the plum thicket. Hazily, in a mellow manner, I recollected where I had left my setter. I picked up my gun and walked to the field.

As I approached the small thicket in the field, I saw the dog moving around the scrubby circle of trees, now crouching, now stealing forward. Then in the dry leaves under the trees I heard quail running and I heard their excited chittering. But every time they would start to come out on one side, the dog would be there. He actually had them herded for me. He was gentling them, mildly shooing them back into cover until I would come. I stood for several minutes, watching his singular behaviour; and I made up my mind that I had never seen anything

superior in pure animal intelligence. Nor was I too late to get some sport in the clear afterglow; but my aim was julepy.

This isn't exactly a story of a sportsman; but it is a curious outdoor happening. In a certain Southern harbour there are several spar-buoys that are lighted at night by a faithful old Negro who has been in the employ of the harbour authorities for nearly half a century. One evening, last autumn, he approached one of his buoys as usual and tipped it toward his boat so that he could adjust and light the small lantern on its top. He heard a queer sound and for a moment relaxed his hold on the spar. In another moment he clearly distinguished an object coiled on the flat top of the spar, just below the light. It was a rattlesnake! And the sound that the Negro had heard was the snake's warning whirr of his rattles. Nor need this incident appear extraordinary; for it is a well-known fact that rattlesnakes are great swimmers, and that at certain seasons they cross bodies of water of considerable size, such as the creeks and bays along the coast. I know a fisherman who last summer left his boat at a landing as usual, and the next morning when he came down to start for his day's work, he found two rattlesnakes calmly coiled up in it. They had swum across the salt creek in the night and had taken his boat for a hospitable old hollow log. And their guess was accurate except in the particular of its being hospitable.

Once my brother and I were alligator-fishing in the delta of the Santee. We had lines set half a mile

apart up and down the river for perhaps five miles. While we were visiting these lines one afternoon—the time of year was early September—we heard a bull begin to bellow. Often, especially in the spring, had I heard the great bulls roaring over the lonely reaches of the delta country; and if it is true that their uproar is a song of love, the female alligators must have singularly blunted sensibilities not to be frightened to death by such wrathful bass cooings. But this was in early autumn; it was mid-afternoon; and the sun was blazing down. Yet our ears were unmistakably greeted by the deep subterranean bellowing of an ancient bull.

We thought, of course, that this serenade of dragon music was somewhere far off on the delta, or in the river. And let me say that the roar of the 'gator is somewhat ventriloquistic in its nature; the exact position of its source is hard to locate. I thought the bull was several miles away.

As we drew near one of our lines, we saw a monster of an alligator lying on the surface of the water. He looked peculiar, for instead of having but a stealthy eye out, his whole body was showing. He looked blown up, like a croaking frog. Suddenly we became aware that this bull, which was firmly hooked, was the one bellowing. And he continued his terrible racket until we brought a rifle into play. This is the solitary instance I can give of actually seeing a wild bull alligator while bellowing.

I know that you think by this time that I have Ananias on the dead run; but I really must tell you

of the feat of an old hunter of my acquaintance by the name of Henderson—Jake Henderson. He lived on the banks of a Southern river and his backyard was a swamp. One day, when the river was very unruly, having decided to jump its banks and meander over the countryside, Jake took his gun and followed the freshet-edge for some kind of dinner. While standing under a young pine he espied three shapes swimming the river and coming in his direction. They were deer, and while they wore crowns of different sizes, all were bucks. Don't you know how deer run sometimes—each one just covering the next one's flank? Well, these deer were swimming like that. And they came ashore in the same order. They elected to land just within easy gunshot of Jake. His gun was a muzzle-loader and one barrel only was ready for business.

"The blamed things were all mixed up," he said to me, when I asked him about it. "I just pulled down on the crowd, making sure that I wasn't slighting the biggest buck of the three. At the crack of the gun two of them fell. The third one ran about fifty yards and then took the count. I got all three of them with the one barrel."

Now, honestly, this is my last one. It's a pretty story, I think, and I like to keep it in mind. A famous deer-hunter by the name of Pepper—a man well known to me and my family—had hunted all day long in a great swamp that lay to northward of his home. He had seven English deerhounds, and these had jumped a buck about noon and had run

him for four hours, when their master quit the hunt. He left them running in the swamp. After he got home and was sitting on the front porch to rest, wondering how many of his dogs would get home that night, he heard the faint and far-off music of the whole pack. And it was heading his way. Curious, he walked down toward the stable, and there listened again. The approach became more rapid and definite. The deer was coming for him. He thought of going back for his gun, but something restrained him. He probably decided that the buck would come to the edges of the swamp and double back. But soon the great creature appeared. It was far spent. Indeed, its condition was pitiful. It raced across a cotton-field, and each bound over the high, sandy rows looked as if it would be its last. It struck a lane and turned down it. On it came—a splendid ten-pointer. It followed the lane and ran into Pepper's garden!

"Well, I'll be darned!" said Pepper. And he closed the garden gate in the face of the oncoming hounds. There was a lower gate, and this one he opened. Through this the deer was permitted to escape. I don't know what you think of it, but I like to know that there are hunters like Pepper who have a heart.

While the life of wild creatures is in most cases fairly well understood, there remain certain strange and mysterious aspects and incidents that appeal because of their very baffling nature. Sometimes the

matter is of solitary occurrence; sometimes it is a customary or habitual happening; and always it remains unexplained, or if explanations are given they lack finality.

During late November, 1921, there occurred in Blake's Pasture, which is part of the great game preserve of the Santee Club—a tract of virgin yellow pine on the South Carolina coast—a mystery that promises to remain unsolved. It was nothing less than a titanic encounter between two huge and savage wild creatures; and the whole mystery consists in the lost identity of one of the combatants.

While walking in the pasture, one of the club's game wardens came upon an old bull alligator, twelve feet long. The creature was lying on a sunny pine-land ridge; apparently he had been dragged from his deep hole, nearly a hundred feet away. On every hand were evidences of the bitterest of struggles. Bushes were laid flat, the ground was torn and trampled, and blood spatters were on the bases of the pines.

The condition of the alligator registered the fierceness of the combat. His plight was pitiable. One eye was gone. The other was swollen and sightless. On his broad, black back were six long deep gashes, such as would be made by some blunt weapon. His tail was almost severed from his body. He was still alive; but his condition was such that he could not live. The question naturally was: What could have done a thing like this?

Between the time of the encounter and the finding

of the wounded alligator, there had been a heavy, dashing rain; therefore whatever tracks the other combatant may have left had been obliterated. The warden believed that the piece of savagery had been committed by a monstrous wild boar, which is known to be in the pasture, and which long has been infamous for its size and its ferocity; moreover, it is well known that there is no wild creature on earth more truculent than a boar. Perhaps, as the warden surmised, such a beast was the alligator's assailant. However, another bull alligator may have been the second fighter. It is, moreover, barely possible that the work might have been done by an old white-tail stag; in the fall of the year a buck loves a fight. A natural enmity appears to exist between deer and reptiles; and an unusually large stag could have inflicted the wounds described by leaping, with his feet drawn together into a cluster of lances, on the stolid and—against so adroit an enemy—almost defenseless alligator. It appears that this strange and lonely battle is likely to remain a genuine mystery of the woodlands.

I have mentioned that this bull alligator had perhaps been dragged from his hole—a black pit of water beneath the roots of two ancient cypresses. Likely he had retired to such a place for hibernation; and this matter leads us to our next mysterious matter. It consists in our inability to answer definitely this query: Can a wild creature hibernate at will? For it must be remembered that there is such a thing as the line of hibernation; north of this, all

creatures of certain kinds retire into dens to sleep through the winter; south of it, they do nothing of the sort. In the region of the line some sleep and some do not; again, some sleep part of the time. Such a matter is very puzzling; for it must be apparent that the business of going to sleep for several months is a genuinely serious matter for a creature's system; its constitution must, of course, be fortified against the long fast to be undergone. Yet in the region that I have mentioned, hibernation is an exceedingly erratic affair. The black bears of the swamp apparently never hibernate; the small mammalia are abroad all winter. The reptiles act very indifferently; it seems to me that they go to sleep if they please and come forth when they so desire to do. But of course it must be remembered that the Southern winter is never a serious affair; balmy days, with spicy aromatic winds blowing, are not of infrequent occurrence; and the rose and the jasmine will be found blooming in mid-January. Yet how can a creature actually hibernate in an inconsequential fashion?

I remember walking on the edge of Blake's Marsh trying to discover in the tracks of the many creatures in the damp sand some of the story that they had written; I saw there craft, flight, wary approach, frantic retreat, pausings, turnings aside. It was in late December, and a genial sun was beating down on the wide and silent marsh before me and on the murmuring woods behind. Finally, in a dried water-course, where the mud was caked into huge slabs,

I came upon a trail that amazed me. I at once recognized the bear-like tracks and the heavy wide trail of an alligator. Before he is seen, an alligator's size may be judged by the size of his feet and by the width of the trail left by his slowly dragged body. Here, then, was a 'gator abroad when all respectable relatives were fast asleep! Never before this time had I known one of these great reptiles to be out between early December and early March. Yet the trail was unmistakable. I followed it and soon came upon the early riser.

He was a bull of good length—nine feet, I judged; and he lay in the delicious sunshine among the tussocks of the dried watercourse. He appeared hugely satisfied with life and with his place in it. When I came up to him, he was fast asleep, and my gentle prodding with a long pine pole seemed not greatly to disturb him. He awoke amiably, blinked at me drowsily, and did not seem to feel at all on the defensive. This is the only alligator I ever saw in that latitude abroad in the winter; I mean voluntarily abroad. I have seen one or two that had been washed from their hibernating quarters by floods. My father, who lived near the delta of the Santee for more than sixty years, told me that in the month of February, 1920, he heard a bull alligator bellowing, but that he had never heard another in the winter. This strange cry or call is either a love song or else a challenge to rivals—more probably the latter. While I personally have seen but the one 'gator come out when he should have been asleep, yet other

observers from the same country report that not infrequently an old bull will be restless throughout the winter. One has even been observed swimming in the broken ice of a canal. It appears not unlikely that the older one of these saurians becomes, the more readily he can resist changes in temperature.

The irregularity of hibernating habits portrayed by the alligator is also true of snakes. In Florida, the diamond-back rattler does not hibernate in the true sense; in the northern limits of his range, he does—sometimes. In Carolina and Georgia hunters who penetrate the haunts of this regal serpent in those months during which he is supposed to be sleeping have to be very wary; for not infrequently he is out of his den. A balmy day in December, 1921, after Christmas, I measured a specimen of this serpent more than six feet long which had come out of its den in a swamp near the Cooper River. Timbercutters of the same region told me that they had, in their ranging of the woods, killed three specimens of the same snake, no one of which had been found in a den. However, I think that if they had observed closely, they would have found that in every case the snake was not far from a hollow log, an old stump, or some equally genial place for hibernating purposes.

There are many strange happenings in wild life which I might mention; but they are not true mysteries. For example, there is that ancient query: What becomes of all the dropped antlers of deer? Any one who has known the West knows what becomes of the buffalo horns. They lie where they

fall; but, having been in most cases dropped in the open plains, they remain visible. Deer horns lie where they fall, unless dragged off a little by squirrels, woodrats, and similar rodents, which love to gnaw them for the lime and salt. But, as these horns are usually dropped in dense thickets, in wildwoods, in remote swamps, and often in the water, they are not usually found. For many, many years I have ridden the Southern woods, where deer are plentiful; yet I have found comparatively few antlers. Yet I know that I passed hundreds. However, on a restricted range, as on a sea island, deer horns are found by scores. It is therefore clear that the apparent disappearance of the shed horns can be explained.

But here is a matter which came under my observation and gave me cause for wonder. It was nothing less than the mating of a robin with a brown thrasher. Fundamentally more remarkable, perhaps, is the unfailing integrity maintained by every species and every variety in nature. When, for example, one considers all the warblers, all the sparrows, and all the shore birds, many of which can hardly be distinguished from their fellows, it is extraordinary with what unerring instinct each female of each variety selects its mate from the ranks of its own group. In certain very rare instances, however, this integrity is not maintained, as in the case just mentioned. The robin and this thrasher mated in the shrubbery on the lawn of a house in a Pennsylvania village, and there fledged a brood of young.

The small birds were somewhat extraordinary in appearance, showing clearly their mixed heritage. But the fact of such a mating constitutes the real mystery.

Of a higher and very much more fascinating nature are those mysteries which are to be ascribed to personality. I mean to say that there appear, from time to time, in the ranks of wild life certain individuals which are extraordinary. These individuals may be remarkable for size, for colour, for intelligence, for cruelty, for powers of friendship, and for other qualities which we are accustomed to associate with human beings only. One thing that makes people interesting is the fact that they are so very different. Their variety dispels monotony. And, in a lesser degree, we find some of this same variety in wild life. Everyone knows that there is no real accounting for what we call genius; some men seem to have it and most do not. It is not really the capacity for hard work, though it has been encouragingly so described; for many a man toils unceasingly without manifesting it. I like to think that in the ranks of creatures of a lower order than man there sometimes appear individuals of singularly high qualities.

A few months ago, government hunters in the southern part of Wyoming killed a black bear which for years had been a merciless marauder, though the black bear is not usually considered a dangerously predatory animal. This monster weighed a little more than seven hundred pounds. Old bear-hunters would not at first credit this weight, for it is well known that a four-hundred-

pound black bear is a large one. However, here was the creature, and such was its weight. Moreover, it had a reputation for ruthless slaughter of stock. A decided individual was this old solitary creature; he had departed from the ways of his kind. He was a genius in the sense of being superior to his fellows. And his superior intelligence—amply proved by the authentic tales of his extraordinary wariness—set him as much apart as his physical prowess.

I knew of a white-tail stag of such size and beauty that, by many hunters of the Southern pineland country, was believed to be a spectre. For a matter of fifteen years he roamed that wild and forbidding country known as Four Holes Swamp, on the South Atlantic seaboard. At last he was shot by a renowned hunter, who thus described the matter to me: "I have in my day killed hundreds of deer. Since boyhood I have been familiar with this country and with all the wild creatures in it. I am a man who has faith in his gun that has served him long and well. But when I saw this buck coming toward me, my first impulse was to run. Then I thought of flattening myself behind a tree so that he would not see me. I could not believe that such an animal existed. I could not believe it was a deer."

I did not see this buck; but I have seen and measured his antlers. They carry twenty-six points, whereas the normal mature white-tail carries only six, eight, or ten—and very occasionally twelve. These antlers are massive, craggy, and have an amazing spread between the beams of more than two feet.

Such a creature, therefore, is something of a mystery; and it seems a pity to rob a weird swamp of an animal which appears fitly to express some of its solitary strangeness, latent secrecy, and obscure sorcery.

Sometimes an individual of ordinary appearance will, under special circumstances, develop traits wholly alien to the traits of its family. I have in mind particularly a pet doe that became a "watch dog" in the yard of a woodland friend of mine. He lived far out on the borders of a great swamp, and it was no difficult thing for him to secure a fawn as a pet. This particular fawn, by the time it had lost its spots, acquired and maintained a mandate over the yard—of about two acres—wherein it roamed. This was not a special enclosure for the deer, but was merely the yard surrounding the house. As the doe approached maturity, she made her rule more arbitrary. When visitors came to the home, she inspected them carefully; and such was her alertness that no one ever succeeded in reaching the outside of the gate without perceiving the graceful sentinel on the inside. Dogs she hated; and this feeling is a true deer trait, ingrained by centuries of hunting. But she would never run from a dog while she was in the yard. In the first place, she would keep a dog out if possible; and if one managed to crawl under the fence, she would chase him mercilessly; and the invader seemed to know that he was no match for the angry doe, whose sharp hoofs are really formidable weapons. Over the fence this deer would come and go at will; and if a dog took after her while she was outside, she

would run, clear the fence at a floating bound, and then turn menacingly to bay.

On one occasion her owner put into the yard with her certain very valuable sheep, and a few nights later two sheep-killing dogs tried to raid the place. There was one place beneath the fence through which the sheep-killers could come; but when they reached this aperture, they found that the guardian of the yard was on the other side. One of them thrust his brutal head under the wire, and the doe trampled it fiercely. The dog's clamour over his punishment brought the master of the house to the rescue. One of the beasts he shot; the other escaped. But the sheep were saved; and their safety had been due to the boldness of an animal which is ordinarily considered to be one of the gentlest and most timid of creatures.

IX

SERPENTS OF THE TRAIL

FOR more than an hour I had been seated in the delightful sunshine of the Southern woods. My back was against an ancient live-oak; indeed, I was retired among the huge convolutions of the old monarch's high-heaved roots. I had seen some interesting things in wild life: half-a-dozen gray squirrels disporting themselves among the dead leaves on the ground; a covey of quail trooping out of the woods toward a broom-sedge; and one lone wild gobbler beginning to roam in that purposeful and significant manner which shows that he feels the coming urge of spring. Suddenly, off to my left, there was a flash of black and white falling; then came a heavy thud which was followed by the sound of slow scuffling. I quickly went over toward the scene of this encounter of the wild, and was rewarded by a strange sight. A king snake, which had been basking in the mellow sunlight on a horizontal live-oak limb some ten feet above the ground, had dropped from that height upon a glass snake, which, as I came up, was in the snake-killer's fatal toils. The manœuvre was characteristically clever on the part of the king snake, or what we call the "thunder-

bolt," which on this occasion justified his latter appellation.

On another day, near the same spot, I saw a great king snake pursuing another reptile; I did not catch sight of the victim, but I felt sorry for him; for never have I seen a pursuer appear more in earnest or more certain of accomplishing his design. With a lithe, rocking motion, and with his head and forebody held high off the ground, the beautiful harrier moved swiftly through the woods, threading the secret pathways with eerie assurance and with all the speed and alertness of the most crafty of hunters. The end of this chase I did not witness; but on another occasion I saw the behaviour of a king snake when his prey was taken from him; and the reader can judge from that incident, now described, that the thunderbolt can hardly be robbed of his kill.

A party of us had been deer-hunting in October, the worst month for snakes in the pinelands of Carolina. As we gathered in the road after a drive, one of our number bore over his shoulder a long pine pole, and upon the pole a strange burden. Wrapped in final and in fatal battle were a rattler and a king snake. They were of about the same proportions; the killer was slightly longer, and the rattler slightly bulkier in the body. This was a timber rattlesnake, and not a lordly diamond-back. When this sinister burden was deposited in the road, we separated the snakes with poles; and a difficult feat it was to drag them apart. One man of the group suggested that we have a race; and to this we agreed. We lifted

the rattler across the roadside ditch and gave him a quiet chance to crawl away. Indeed, we were obliged to give him almost a half-hour before we were sure that he had made any kind of getaway. At the end of that time we set the thunderbolt down on the trail of the rattler. I shall never forget with what intelligent alacrity the king snake followed the slot. We followed also; but we had some difficulty in so doing. About two hundred yards from the road we came upon the combatants. Once more they were locked in grim and gorgeous battle. It appeared to me that they had exactly the same "hold" on each other as they had had when first found. This second encounter we did not try to terminate. And it could have but one end, for the king snake is complete master of the rattler. However, I doubt if any king snake could handle one of the huge old diamond-backs that it has been my dubious privilege to encounter—regal serpents, not only of dreadful venomous power, but also of superbly formidable muscular development.

During my plantation life I have not had many meetings with the true diamond-back; nor, indeed, with his humbler relative, the timber rattler. But such encounters as have been mine have impressed me greatly. These reptiles I respect highly, and I have the natural and common dread of them. It is, however, a remarkable thing that so few persons are actually struck by the rattler; and of those struck, the majority recover. But let it not be thought that the rattlesnake's venom may not prove fatal, as a

New England schoolteacher lately contended with me. I was asked to show a single instance in which the rattler had killed a man. It happens that for many years I have carefully collected data on this somewhat gruesome matter, and I can report several authentic instances. I can in each instance give name, date, and exact circumstances of the tragedy. I will comment on two only. The first occurred near Arden, North Carolina, in the summer of 1894. I was within a mile of the scene of the accident. Two mountain children were picking blackberries along an old fence row. The elder, some yards from the younger, heard the latter talking to something. Then suddenly there was a cry. When the elder child reached the younger, the rattler had struck it twice upon the neck, the most dangerous place. The child soon lapsed into unconsciousness and never recovered. The snake in this instance was not killed; but it was undoubtedly a regular mountain timber rattler.

The second case I do not give without hesitation, yet it is well for every man or woman who ventures into snake country to be aware of the possible peril. Only by that caution which comes from being intelligently informed can danger be avoided. Less than a year ago, on a plantation not far south of Savannah, Georgia, two brothers were inspecting some pine timber on one of the wilder parts of their estate. Both of them were standing on a huge fallen log, which rested in a bed of ferns, huckleberry bushes, gallberries, and the like. They were talking in that absorbed fashion which is the result of the mind's

being busy with appraisal when one of them stepped down from the log into the underbrush. He was instantly struck, and with no warning, by a huge diamond-back. The wound was directly in the femoral artery; and so instantaneous was the effect of the venom that the victim fell to the ground. He swooned and within four hours he had passed away without ever having regained consciousness. The snake, a most formidable chimera, was killed.

But rattlesnakes, especially the monster diamond-backs, are not anywhere very common; the Southwest contains more than any other region. And from about the latitude of Savannah northward reptiles hibernate from November to March, which are the very months when sportsmen are most likely to be abroad in snaky haunts.

Now, if the reader will permit me, I shall descend from the dreadful to the amusing—or shall rise, perhaps. For it is a fact that there are certain features about snake life which render it humorous—at least from the human standpoint.

One day I was fishing in a big ricefield canal, which is no mean place for large-mouth bass. I had a Negro with me. Getting a somewhat sluggish strike, I tried to hook the fish, but instead, my line became fastened about a submerged snag. The Negro offered to loose it for me. He made his way down the bank; he stepped into the edge of the water, holding my line gingerly in his hand. Drawing it taut so that the direction of it into the water would locate the old snag for him, he reached down with



Courtesy of Edward Avery McIlbenny

A scaly dragon of the Santee swamp.

the other hand into the depths of the muddy water. Meanwhile I waited somewhat negligently, expecting nothing interesting. Suddenly the Negro cried out wildly; and he had the best reason in the world so to cry. He had managed to pull the line loose, but as it came free there emerged from the water, fast hooked, a huge rusty cotton-mouth moccasin; and it swiftly wrapped itself, tail first, about the man's bare arm. For a moment we should have been in the movies. I was on the bank, holding the line sufficiently taut to keep the snake from striking the Negro, but not at all anxious to have the moccasin suddenly released and thrown into my shirt-front. But in a moment it was over and the man was freed. Yet it took the two of us some time to get rid of our dangerous prey. I may add that in Southern rivers, in reserves, in ricefield ditches and canals, moccasins abound. Several times, in high water, I have had the cotton-mouth drop into my boat from overhanging aquatic bushes, on which this snake loves to bask.

Not once, but several times, I have come upon one snake in the grimly amusing task of swallowing another snake. The contest enters the championship class when the sizes of the two reptiles approach equality. I remember seeing a moccasin trying to "get away" with a common water snake that was almost his own length. When I found them, they had entered a difficult stage of the business. Taking proper precautions, I pulled them apart, but it was not an easy thing to do. One serpent appeared to me to be feeling about as badly abused as the other;

but what surprised me was the fact that the water snake was not yet dead. Nor did he die then. I killed the cotton-mouth, which is a deadly brute, but the other snake I let go. It is harmless, though many observers take it to be a true moccasin.

When Solomon—or perhaps it was David—mentioned the way of the serpent upon the sand as passing strange, he might have made the matter more concrete had he said the way of the water snake with the bullfrog. The enmity between these two is a ludicrous thing. The mature bullfrog is a pompous, vain, bumptious fellow; and he is an enormous coward. From the borders of a lagoon I love to watch the military manœuvres of frogs and their arch-enemies, the snakes. The largest frogs are, I think, safe from attack; but their safety does not seem to reassure them. The most impressive and manly bellowing will cease; the frog will shrink and cower, he will ease himself off, or he will make the leap of his life if a water snake comes his way. I do not blame the frog. But I do find amusement in his Falstaffian ways. I remember coming one day on the margin of a ricefield upon a sight so strange that I found myself wondering if I were really awake. A tremendous water snake had caught a medium-sized frog, but he had not by any means subdued him. The snake had the frog by the front of the head, just as I have seen a snake take a nine-inch brook trout; but the frog was using his legs to good advantage. I studied the expression on the face of the reptile: it was crafty yet disturbed, mali-

cious, grim, catlike. There was a lively tussle, sure enough; and throughout the whole performance the bullfrog kept "bulling" in a painfully muffled fashion down the very throat of his would-be murderer. But I had come in time to act as the victim's deliverer.

One of the most curious little reptiles I know is the hog-nosed rattler, a diminutive reptile but a genuine rattlesnake of which I have spoken before. Another curiosity is the coral snake; an anomaly in nature. It is almost as spectacular in colouring as the Gila monster, and it has not a single resemblance to any other venomous reptile. It is slender, shapely, round, and has a small head, weak jaws, and a very small mouth. But it is a true venom-carrier. I have not seen many coral snakes; and of those I have observed, most had been ploughed up in fields bordering woodlands, for it spends a good deal of its time underground or under shelter. I suppose that this habit is largely a matter of precaution, for his gorgeous bands of black and red must make him a brilliant target for enemies. This snake is a strange creature; it appears half asleep most of the time, and has never appeared to me to have any definite personality, with which, for example, the blacksnake is well supplied.

Such are a few glimpses of these children of nature that are classified as sinister, and for which the human race certainly has an ancient antipathy—an aversion which probably is not all on one side. And besides man the reptile world has many dread enemies. In the region of which I write the snakes are

preyed upon by eagles and hawks; they are destroyed in wholesale fashion by forest fires; particularly when they are hibernating in old logs and stumps; and they are devoured by hogs. Deer also kill snakes, especially rattlesnakes, by springing upon them. And even a small harmless snake is hardly safe from the average man, whose revulsion at seeing it is such that he does not know how or care whether to distinguish between the evil and the good.

As a race, I think, most reptiles are disappearing; and perhaps it is to be expected, for at least to me they appear to be survivors from the lost ages of the flying lizards and the monstrous amphibians which once made the world no place upon which man could with decency dwell.

X

STRANGER THAN FICTION

IF YOU were going whale-fishing, you certainly would never think of arming yourself with a bird-gun; nor would you go walking. At once you would think, at least, of a harpoon, a bomb-lance, and a boat. Yet I know a man who killed a huge whale with a shotgun, and he walked right up to him to perform the execution. This story is nakedly true. The facts are simply the following.

Late in September, 1893, a terrific West Indian cyclone swept up the coast of South Carolina. Within the memory of man its violence had never been equalled save only by the historic gale of 1822, when many rice-planters and scores of their Negro slaves were drowned. At the time of the later storm, a hunter from McClellanville, a small coastal village, was on Murphy's Island, a typical island of the barrier group which fringes that part of the South Atlantic seaboard. He had gone to the island to try to round up some half-wild stock, and perhaps to get a shot or two at the earliest migrated shorebirds. He had taken a cast-net with him to catch the silver mullets in the creeks behind the island. But, as has been said, the storm overtook him; and while it up-

set his original plans, it offered him a great opportunity.

During the height of the gale, while he was seeking shelter in the dense red-cedar woods of the island, and had come close to the outer beach to watch the magnificent surf raging there, he saw a huge black object, buffeted by the mountainous waves, washed in toward the shore. At first he thought it the hulk of some old derelict which the fury of the storm had brought in. But soon, through the rain, driven by the howling wind, he distinguished nothing less than a monster sperm whale—seventy-eight feet long, by subsequent measurements—that was helpless in the power of the cyclone. Its struggles were so great that it was not at once washed clear on the beach, but several times seemed to be about to clear itself and escape into deeper water. When it first appeared, it was within about fifty yards of the shore. It was driven nearer, and at last was stranded fast within about thirty yards of the shore, where the tremendous surf pounded it.

Realizing that the whale would be of great value to him, the hunter returned to his own frail boat that he had pulled up in the woods, and from the cast-net in it he cut away a dozen of the heavy ounce weights. Drawing the shot from some duck-shot shells, he put one of these balls in each shell. Returning to the front beach, he fought his way out through the storm until he was on the very brink of the raging breakers. From that distance, half-blinded with spume, he fired again and again at the

mountainous head of the whale. The shots proved effective. By noon of the following day, when the storm had subsided, he was able to examine his capture. It was a mature sperm whale, now left high and dry by the subsiding of the waters. It was indeed a valuable piece of flotsam that the storm had brought ashore to the hunter, for from it he extracted, with the aid of friends, much oil and whalebone. I may add that I treasure one of the vertebræ of this huge mammal as a trophy of a rare and curious occurrence.

A hunter of the Southern pinelands shot, at dusk one evening, a very fine buck. He was satisfied that he had mortally wounded the animal, but it was too late for him to take up the pursuit. However, early the next morning he rode out to the place where he had had his last sight of the wounded deer. Near this place, as he was riding quietly along he saw, not far off, lying on a sunny sandhill in the open pineland, a splendid buck.

"My deer now," he said, jumping from his horse and flinging the bridle over a sapling. He leaned his gun against a pine and stepped forward to examine the deer.

Coming up to it, and seeing no wound on the upturned side, he seized the nearer antler and gave it a pull so as to turn the deer over. Something happened! The amazed buck, which must have been fast asleep, and which had not heard the hunter's approach over the soft sand, leaped high in the air and made off in great style. It was another buck, for the

one which he had wounded he found not far from the spot where the sleeper had been roused.

Two fishermen were fishing on Folly Island beach. For bait they were using strips of fish that they cut from a large mullet. As only one of them had a knife, he would leave it sticking in the bait fish, which was lying on the sand near the dunes. The two men were so busy with their sport that they did not notice a turkey vulture, which for a long while had been circling near, swooping down upon the bait fish. One fisherman turned just as the vulture was rising; he was the owner of the knife. To his dismay he saw the scavenger had appropriated both the fish and the hunting-knife! Far over the sea marshes swept the black robber; and the knife was never recovered. As this incident occurred in the spring of the year, and as turkey vultures nearly always curiously decorate their nests with bits of china, bright buttons, glass, and the like, it is possible that the great bird took a fancy to the mother-of-pearl on the knife-handle and intentionally committed the double theft.

Vivian Sloan, Chief Game Warden of the County of Charleston, witnessed the following incident, which was most remarkable. Few people realize how heavy is the toll taken from the family of the wild ducks by the alligator. This great reptile is undoubtedly partly responsible for the depletion in the number of wood-ducks, for these beautiful birds often nest on the borders of alligator-infested rivers and lagoons. So crafty is the alligator's submarine

approach that even so alert and wary a creature as a wild duck is frequently caught napping.

The Warden tells of watching a single duck floating on the still bosom of a lagoon. Suddenly the water broke behind the duck, and the bird was seized in the jaws of an alligator and drawn under the surface of the pond. The observer thought this was the end of the little wild-life tragedy; but within a minute the waters were again violently disturbed—and out of the dark tumult rose the dishevelled and frightened wildfowl! The duck evidently was none the worse for its terrifying experience; but few indeed are the creatures that escape when once the grim grip of the alligator's jaws has closed on them. In this case, probably the reptile had taken the duck into its mouth uninjured, where it raised a little cyclone of protest of its own, whereupon the 'gator momentarily opened his jaws and the duck flew out.

A bird so timorous as a wild turkey would hardly be supposed capable of rescuing a comrade; yet anything can happen through accident. This is the manner of the happening. A friend of mine, an excellent woodsman, was hunting turkeys one morning early when, by chance, he ran into a whole flock in some tall broom-sedge. As the birds rose, he shot down a fine gobbler. He immediately dragged this bird into a little sheltered place beside a great pine, and after a few minutes he began to call; for when a flock is scattered it is an easy matter for a skilful caller to bring one or more of the birds to him. In a short time the hunter heard the dry leaves rustling,

and he got ready to shoot. Meanwhile he noticed that the turkey which he had shot did not seem quite dead; but the one coming was too close for him to make any movements. Suddenly the called bird appeared. The hunter, whose gun was at his shoulder, quickly fired. At the blast of the report, the wounded turkey gave a convulsive leap, with wings outspread, and dashed into the man's face! Confused and for the moment half-blinded, he struck the bird aside, and ran forward to see if the other one had fallen. He could find no trace of the second turkey; and when he returned to the tree, the first one had vanished also! As he was on the margin of a deep swamp he was prevented from searching in one direction. In any event, both wild turkeys escaped.

I remember seeing a most peculiar happening some years ago. I was standing on a ricefield bank watching a group of Negro men and women hoeing rice that had just begun to grow. All at once one of the Negro women—all of whom were barefooted—detached herself from the group and began to run frantically through the rice, jumping and screaming in a most amazing way. Seeing me on the bank, she turned and came for me at full speed. As she passed me she cried, "Snake! Snake!" I saw an object whipped wildly behind her, but could not quite make out just what it was. Running after her, I overtook her near the end of the bank. By this time she was out of breath and exhausted from fright and from exertion. A snake had, indeed, struck her; and it was a burly cotton-mouth moccasin—a deadly crea-

ture. But the stroke had been delivered in the callous part of her right heel, and in this callous the fangs of the serpent had become embedded. I think that the snake was as worried as the woman. But he did not worry long, for I dispatched him. However, a small stick had to be used to pry the jaws open and free the woman's heel from the strangely tenacious grip of the rusty-backed old reptile's jaws.

A duck-hunter, living near the Wando River, planning to shoot at a blind early one morning, was careful to tie up his retriever, which he did not want in the blind with him. No sooner had he set out his decoys than the ducks began to pour in. The shooting was very fast and exciting, but the mist of morning somewhat interfered with the aim. After a time the gunner noticed a large drake apparently drifting into the decoys. He promptly shot it. The drake beat its way off over the water, which, meanwhile, was being churned up in a most unusual fashion. It then dawned on the hunter that he had shot something else than the drake. It proved to be his dog. The retriever had followed him, had, unobserved, swum into the river and caught a wounded duck, and was bringing it to his master when he was shot. Unfortunately, the dog was killed and the wild duck got away.

XI

BABES IN THE WOODS

THE alligators had been very destructive that spring, and it had become necessary for me to take some measures of self-defence. Many people suppose that, in North America, alligators are most numerous and grow to the largest size in Florida; as a matter of fact, in the coastal rivers of Georgia and South Carolina they are more numerous and are larger. Practically all the really big bull alligators of Florida have been killed off by winter tourists. At my home, ten miles above the mouth of the Santee River, and on that stream, alligators have always been a menace to stock. We always counted on their taking one shoat in every three; and they also exacted very cruel and heavy toll on young calves, fawns, and dogs; and since I have mentioned fawns as representing the wild life which they destroy, I may add that they kill a great many wild fowl and fish; indeed, an alligator is a voracious and an unscrupulous feeder. Because he is always an enemy of the plantation-owner, I never lost an opportunity to try to even our account.

On this particular day—which was a balmy day of

late May—when, in that Southern country, the year is almost at its height of beauty and bloom, I had visited a great lonely lagoon on the northern borders of the plantation; and there I had killed two big alligators; the larger of these measured twelve feet, four inches. I shot him in a curious manner. I saw him lying asleep on a log near the shore, discerning him while I was yet some distance away. I knew that I could never approach him through the crackling underbrush; for the senses of these old reptiles are exceedingly keen. I therefore “took to the water” and waded quietly toward him, trying to keep a certain slender cypress tree between his eye and my approaching form. I soon came within range; and a charge of buckshot ended his career. However, he had not been the only one in peril; for just after I shot I turned and looked behind me. Not ten yards away was the black head of another old bull, following in my wake. Before I could fire at him he disappeared under the water; but I have never doubted that he was stalking me. Perhaps only his curiosity led him on, but the curiosity of some creatures may be dangerous.

It was not my purpouse, however, to write of alligators; but of many of the gentle, affectionate, appealing, elf-like little children of the wild which, during many a year spent in the wastelands, I have observed and have come to love exceedingly. It was on this day that I mention that I saw a mother wood-duck taking her young to the water.

As is well known, this most gentle and beautiful

of all American waterfowl nests in a tree. Sometimes the nest is placed in the strong forks formed by larger limbs leaving the trunk; sometimes it is in a hollow—and in this case the wood-duck has often been known to use the deserted nesting and sleeping hole of the black pileated woodpecker, and even of the great horned owl! Almost always the nest is near water; often over the water itself; but occasionally a nest will be found a mile or more from the nearest pond or river. I know of one nest on the North Carolina coast which is built in a holly tree in a man's yard! This shows that the wood-duck is not afraid of man when it can sense that man will not harm it. This, indeed, is true of practically every wild thing.

I had come to an old wire fence that sagged its way into the lagoon when I heard a slight noise before me in a small group of cypresses. I thought that gray squirrels were playing in the trees; for they are very fond of eating the tender leaves of the cypress and of romping in these sheltered retreats. A second sound, however, told me that I had come upon a family of wood-ducks. One of the cypresses was much larger than its fellows; and it was in a low fork of this, as I now observed, that the mother duck had her nest. The nest itself was a slight affair, set tightly in the crotch and deeply lined with down from the breast of the female. I saw the mother on one of the adjacent limbs. She was talking in a curious way to her babies, which I could barely distinguish as a dark group in the nest itself. The male

duck I did not see. Suddenly the mother—how beautiful and gentle were her movements!—stooped over the nest, picked up one of the young in her bill, lifted it carefully, held it clear of the limb and over the water, just a few feet below; selecting, I could tell, a safe place on which her baby could fall, and then dropped it. The little black ball shot downward, landed with an elfin splash in the water, immediately righted itself, and at once began to paddle about gaily and happily. In this precise manner the mother dropped from the nest the entire brood. The little ones were about the size of baby chicks, and, as I have said, were black. When the brood of nine was on the water, with a delicious note of relief and contentment the mother herself settled there; and then I became aware of the male duck, which must have been near all the time. He came swimming out of a patch of marsh and wampee, joined his family, and they swam quietly and gracefully off into the lagoon. It was a scene that my mind must have photographed, for it is as vivid to-day as when I first saw it. Babes in the woods were those little ones—little children of the wastelands and the wild waters; and to me they were most lovable.

One afternoon, late, while sitting on the plantation porch—and let me explain that the situation of my home is remote, my nearest white neighbours being ten miles away through a deep pine forest—I noticed that the flock of turkeys feeding some two hundred yards from the house on the borders of the pasture

were behaving in a curious way. Turkeys act queerly sometimes; often they become greatly excited over the discovery of a snake; and I had been in the habit of investigating whenever they began to cut capers and to be, as Shakespeare says, "antic in their behaviour." Walking down to the flock, which had begun to break up for the spring mating, I found every turkey slowly circling some object; and every bird was expressing an opinion over this discovery. Some of them appeared to be warlike in their attitude; some were merely curious; some were highly excited; none was indifferent. As I came up, the circle widened and broke; and when I stepped into it I saw the strange object toward which all eyes had been turned. It was a tiny wild turkey, a babe of the wildwoods, which had evidently strayed from its mother and had mistaken the voice of a tame turkey for the voice of its true kind. Small as it was and all alone and deserted, it was in no sense forlorn. Young tame turkeys are liable to look sickly and draggled; but a young wild turkey is always trim, alert, and graceful. This small stranger stood on a tuft of sod, its keen head raised high; it was as shapely as a quail. Yet, kindly as were my feelings toward it, I was as much baffled by it as the turkeys had been; I mean in the sense of not knowing exactly what to do with it.

A young wild turkey must not be handled; nor can it be confined. If it can range freely, it will live and grow. But the touch of civilization appears to have a blighting effect on many of these dear chil-

dren of our great wild mother. However, I thought of a device and straightway followed it.

We had a hen turkey that had lately hatched an exceptionally early brood; and she had her young in a yard near the house. I hurried back to the house, drove this old hen with her young down toward the pasture, and introduced her to her new child. By a happy chance, this mother's nature was generous, for she at once adopted the wild turkey. The bird grew to maturity on the plantation and became the leader of the flock. For several years there was vigorous wild blood among my turkeys; the birds were very large, full-plumaged, hardy, handsome, and heavy. In other ways than in their appearance and in their hardihood did they show their wild strain; for they steadfastly refused to enter a turkey house, but roosted every night in the tallest elms, seldom lower than fifty feet. While before the wild gobbler came I had had difficulty in raising a dozen turkeys a year, as long as he remained the flock never numbered fewer than sixty, and one year rose to eighty-four.

He stayed for five years. One unlucky day he walked into a corncrib through an open door. One of the field hands found him there and gave him a bad frightening. When once he had cleared the building, he rose on powerful wings and his flight took him across a creek and a wide delta island. I never saw him again. Trapped and frightened, all his wild nature had returned. It would have been better to lose the whole crib of corn than such a bird.

Judge Seabrook, of Savannah, an enthusiastic sportsman, tells a pretty story of a covey of quail that came into his yard at his old home at Pinora, Georgia. It might be supposed that of all birds, the quail, young or old, would be wildest. But these babies had somehow misplaced their mother. The Judge, seeing the little elfin visitors running about his yard, left his porch, and, stooping down at the foot of the steps, made a cup of his hands on the ground, and then softly gave the sweet alluring note of the mother bob white. The whole covey, fourteen innocent little babies, came running eagerly and climbed into the Judge's hands, where they nestled confidingly, piping in a faint treble their pledge of understanding and obedience. When he would open his hands, they would troop gently out; but always they would return to his whistle. At last the mother began to call from a pea-patch, and the tiny guests ran across the yard and vanished under the fence.

In times of storm the babes of the woods frequently have strenuous times. Such was the mishap that befell a family of raccoons; and it occurred not more than a hundred yards from the house. Among other things this incident shows that often a wild family can dwell very close to a human habitation without disclosing its presence. It took a storm like this one to make me aware of the presence of my interesting neighbours. Early in the morning after the storm mentioned, I discovered, on a ricefield bank behind the house, a large live-oak limb that had been torn from the tree. The limb was hollow, and in the

hollow were four young raccoons. As I lifted the limb, they began to crawl out. Their home, in some respects, had been a good one, though frailly anchored to the tree; these interesting youngsters were lively; their fur was dry and they appeared ready for the day's adventures. All of them were persuaded to walk into a sack and in this were carried to the house. Here they were kept as pets for a short time, and then they were freed. I have never had much pleasure out of keeping wild things confined. I somehow love a live thing better than a dead one, and a free and joyous one rather than a prisoned and wretched one. But while they were with me they showed me many things about raccoon nature that were very interesting.

One trait was the habit of washing their food. Another was the extreme care and delicacy with which they handled everything. I think the hand of the raccoon the most delicately moulded of that of any of Nature's children. It is tiny and black, and every movement of it appears to be controlled by high intelligence. Such a hand becomes in time very powerful, and raccoons are famous for their ability to open clams and oysters. I also found that young raccoons are the most lovable and good-natured of pets, and that they have very wise and entertaining ways with them.

Another family that I captured in a rather curious way was similar to the raccoons in many respects. These pets were minks.

One day I was in the huge salt marsh which lies.

between the mainland and Sandy Point on the Carolina coast. I was going from one small pond to another with a cast-net, taking the landlocked fish which had been left in these deep holes by the flood tides. As I came quietly to the borders of one of these, an old mother mink and her brood of young—there were about seven as nearly as I could count—scuttled out of a tussock of marsh and made for the water. All of them were humping themselves in the water for one of their characteristic dives when I made a swift but not very accurate cast of the net. Upon drawing it in I found that I had caught three young minks. These were about one third grown.

They were slender, graceful, sleek, intelligent creatures, with beautiful fur, which was soft as sealskin. Their faces were peaked and bright; their eyes were sharp and beady. I did not attempt to take them from the net, but carried them home in it. For a week or more I kept them, feeding them on fresh fish. I had them in a box near the water; but of course I could see that they were very homesick for their native element.

Perhaps the most appealing of all babes of the woods is the fawn of the Virginia or white-tail deer. There is an old English superstition that if a fawn ever hears the human voice and feels the touch of the human hand, it will desert its own kind to follow man. This has some truth in it. At least, I never had any trouble in "gentling" a fawn. It makes the most interesting, affectionate, playful, and troublesome of pets. I say troublesome because the fawn

can jump almost anything. You cannot keep both a fawn and flowers, especially geraniums. He will not only eat the stalks and flowers, but he will take the most childish delight—especially if he be a little buck—in pushing off with his head every flowerpot on a stand. I think he enjoys hearing the pots fall and break.

One day I was driving down a pineland road with a companion, who happened to have a gun. As we neared a woodsman's cabin a fawn dashed out of a thicket, jumped the road, and ran into the yard in front of the cabin. My friend sprang from the buggy with his gun. I warned him not to shoot so close to the house, and of course I didn't want him to kill the fawn. As we came up, the owner of the cabin met us, and we asked him about the young deer.

"Oh, that," he said; "that's the baby's pet. I expect it's under the dining-room table now. It always hides there when it gets scared. He and the baby sleep together," he added, his voice softening in affection. "The fawn sleeps on the floor, and the baby lies down beside it and puts its head on the fawn's flank. If the fawn wakes when the baby is still asleep, the fawn will not stir; but if the baby wakes first, he will pull the fawn's ears. We call them the twins."

There is one more little incident that I should like to record. It has to do with the woodcock, one of the most beautiful and intelligent American game birds. Every year a few pairs of these birds nest on

the plantation; though it is customary for them to migrate before they breed. One pair had a nest in the dense shrubbery near the plantation house and was an object of the rarest interest to me. I watched it until the four young hatched, and was highly amused to see how solemn these tiny fellows looked, with their large heads and their very long bills, pointing almost straight downward. One day when the birds were about a week old, I went down as usual to investigate their progress and was troubled at finding only two in the nest. Suddenly I heard a delicate music of whistling wings, and the mother settled on the nest. Nuzzling the young gently with her beak, she lifted one and flew away through the thicket. She held her baby in her bill just as a cat holds a kitten. The fourth baby was removed in the same manner. She was moving them to a safer place. My visits had become too frequent.

Her flight took her across a marsh and into a deep swamp, and though I investigated, I never found the new home. But I am glad that she did carry her young away from what she considered danger, for it showed me that in the wild heart is the same love, the same protecting care, the same intelligent guarding of children that we find in human families. If I were to summarize my feelings about the babes in the woods, they would be gathered about two impressions: the love of the wild parents for their children, and the irresistible appeal of these lovable babies to the human heart.

XII

THE VOICE O'ER EDEN

THERE is no thoughtful mind but is impressed by the mighty northward flight of the great bird-squadrons of the air, that, hearing the Voice that once breathed over Eden, rejoice with a vernal and nuptial joy, and sweep on millions of hurrying happy wings "the long savannas of the blue." When one lives as I have lived,* at a way-station by which a very interesting and important part of this aërial host passes, one may notice many things about the migrating wildfowl that are denied to those living farther north.

Of all the birds of the region to be considered, the very first to obey the primal instinct is the noble bald eagle. This bird, of course, mates for life, and therefore the mated pair will always be found more or less closely associated. The eagle is with us a permanent resident, though a few migrants of this species pass northward in late February. The bald eagle begins to nest in December; and by the middle of January, eggs will always be found in the aerie. Arthur Wayne, the Southern ornithologist, has told me of a pair of bald eagles that have been under ob-

*These observations were made near Charleston, S. C.

servation for nearly sixty years. Annually they nest in a giant pine on a lonely island in the Wando River; and from this nest fresh eggs have been taken as early as November 20th. If this nest is robbed, the eagles will invariably repair to a second nest, which is on a lofty tree on a barrier island, seven miles away across the pinelands and the sea marshes.

That this remarkably early obedience to the Voice is due to the eagle's size or intelligence is hardly possible; for the wild turkey, our largest and probably our most mentally alert bird, though it begins to "take notice" in March, does not mate until mid-April. However, in the latitude that I describe, the barred owl and the great horned owl nest in January and February, as does the black vulture. These three, eagle, owl, and vulture, are, therefore, our earliest breeders, and in many other matters other than the time of their mating they are similar. They form descending notes in the scale of harrierness. All are strictly carnivorous; all, on occasion, are scavengers.

Nothing, I think, proves more clearly or impressively that the vernal Voice is an impartial one than that the monstrous and ghoulish black vulture is among the very first birds to hear and to heed its romantic call. This is the bird which destroys the young of many large animals, and which will attack full-grown horses and cattle if they are in defenseless position; for example, if they are bogged in marshes, or caught in a fence or in a forked tree.

There is another bird, as solemn-looking as the

owl, but belonging to the great game family, which very early in the season feels primal instincts stirring within him. This is the woodcock. As early as December he begins his "peeping," as his quaint and eerie love-singing is called. Rising on the buoyant wings of amorous ecstasy from the dewy shelter of some swampy thicket, treading the air vibrantly with quivering wings, he will remain suspended above a certain spot; or else he will rise surprisingly high for so shy and ground-loving a bird, performing all the while odd aërial manœuvres which curiously remind one of the antics of some human lovers. While in flight the woodcock peeps his strange, unnatural music which has the same weird quality that one hears in the drumming of the ruffed grouse. This lyric flirtatiousness continues for a month or more, when the birds begin to nest—sometimes as early as the second week in February. The singing is done, however, apparently only by the resident birds; that is, by those that intend remaining to breed. The migrant woodcock, whose movements are excessively erratic, are very shy and silent creatures.

Of game birds other than the woodcock, vast numbers harbour with us during the cold months. Our most typical game bird, the bobwhite, found profusely distributed, does not migrate. Neither do the majority of mourning doves nor the wood-ducks. But as early as the end of January, which oftentimes affords in balmy days an undeniable foretaste of spring, the mallards, black ducks, widgeons, green-

winged teal, blue-winged teal, pintails, shovellers, canvasbacks, and others begin to move in a leisurely fashion. Ducks like the surf-scoters that winter off the coastal islands move northward early in February, others from farther south taking their places. Vast flights of mallards, forsaking their haunts on the coast—the bright, warm sand reefs, the brackish ponds on the sea islands, and the sheltered winding creeks of the delta country—repair to situations higher up the river. Nor are they turning northward in quest of food. It is heart hunger that is upon them; the master passion of life is having its will with them. This gradual northward movement, whose momentum is contingent on the forwardness or backwardness of the season, continues throughout February. Then the enormous concourses begin to break up. Later, in early March, when the tender green is on the cypresses, and the yellow jasmine is rioting over every bush, these flocks become smaller; and when the real flight begins that month, many of the ducks are already paired. The rapturous season of love is upon them. They have heard the Voice; the infinite glamour of love is calling in their soft voices, is beating in their glad hearts, is gleaming in their tinged and tinted plumage.

My region of the Southern coast is, in a sense, an anteroom of summer; for here, behind the scenes, as it were, many migrants change their worn and faded winter plumage for their new and beautiful nuptial garb. This is especially true of the birds that winter

to the southward of us. They return to us very early in the spring, quickly moult, and then depart in true Cinderella style. They remain only sufficiently long to become attired for the wedding. Most of the birds that arrive in full nuptial plumage remain to breed.

The purple gallinule supplies a good example of gorgeousness in marital dress. This aquatic bird has marvellous iridescent colours—blues and purples—with certain sharply contrasting whites. It is found nesting in early spring on freshwater ponds and on lagoons where the wampee grows. The flowers of this plant closely resemble in colours the plumage of the bird; when a gallinule is among beds of flowering wampee, it is difficult to tell the birds from the blossoms. This bird is very graceful. It enjoys walking on lily pads, lifting high its wings in a nervously balancing manner, and opening its white tail from apparent skittishness. Though it is essentially a water bird, when walking among reeds or across lily pads, it appears in terror lest its dainty feet should be wet. Nesting with the gallinule will be found the curious snake bird or water turkey, and also the splendid king rail. This last bird particularly, but aquatic birds generally, have in the South an eternal grim fight against the huge cotton-mouth moccasin, which not only invades the nests to eat the eggs and young, but will also kill and devour such parents as do not keep their distance.

Leaving the old ricefields and the freshwater lagoons where these birds nest, and following the river,

we shall soon come to the mainland beach, before which stretch the wide sea marshes, and beyond which loom the darkly wooded coastal islands which stand as a barrier against the ocean. Here where for miles the vision is untrammelled, one can observe with something like satisfying adequacy the sweep of the great epic of migration.

Let us say that it is an afternoon toward the close of the brief Southern winter. The tide is out, leaving the sand bars, oyster banks, and mud flats bare and glistening. Here all winter there has been a varied abundance of wild life; and during this period the composition of the life has been practically constant. Now, however, the change has begun. Wheeling over a tidal inlet is an osprey, his piercing gaze scanning the tawny waters. He has just arrived from his winter home in Florida; he will nest, I think, on one of the coastal islands; but he may follow the coast for hundreds of miles before choosing a summer residence. Much will depend on where he himself was reared and where he has nested before. On the damp and shimmering beaches are thousands of greater and lesser yellowlegs. They, too, are new arrivals; and they will stay here until they attain full nuptial plumage. Then, in picturesque hosts that fly to the mellow music of a thousand fluting throats, they will migrate in a northwesterly direction. Associated with these birds are sprightly willets, sanderlings, sandpipers of several kinds, and the beautiful ruddy turnstones, which are the last of the wading beach birds to migrate. Above

the creeks and bays the air is bright with the flight of gulls; Bonaparte's gull now shows some sentiment in his plumage, and soon the laughing gull will wear a vest the colour of peach bloom. Yonder great Caspian tern is inspecting a sandbank in a spacious inlet. He will breed there, as will his cousin, the royal tern; but all the gulls go north. The outer beaches are now vocal with the plaintive whistle of Wilson's plover as two or three males insistently follow a female over the sands. There, too, will be the wary and beautiful piping plover. An incessant and not altogether harmonious chorus will be set up by the vast flocks of Hudsonian curlews. But perhaps the most impressive sight of all will be the long lines of black-bellied plover, heading for far-off Melville Peninsula, the setting sun glinting on their fair plumage while they whistle melodiously as long as there is light.

In the marshes themselves I can see the wood ibis, the white ibis, the snowy egret, the common egret, the little blue heron, the double-breasted cormorant, and the great blue heron. Both the great blue heron and the snowy egret will soon nest; the former in some giant short-leaf pine in a solitary forest near the coast; the latter in moss-draped cypresses over some freshwater lagoon. The egret, I am happy to report, is slowly regaining its place, despite the merciless war made upon it by plume-hunters. Within the past few years I have visited several prosperous rookeries near the Carolina coast; in one of these sanctuaries as many as thirty pairs were breeding.

During the months of their mating these birds wear their exquisite, filmy, drifting bridal plumes.

Behind the marshes lies a pinewood that stretches for countless miles. Customarily it is a mysterious, quiet forest; but now it is gay to the point of being noisy; for the incessant tapping and calling of the woodpeckers manifest the season's restless joy. The high forest aisles are brightened by flocks of blue-birds, now "warbling in aërial rivulets." Far up in the aromatic pine crests the pine warblers are singing at their work of weaving tiny bassinets for fairy woodland princes and princesses who will arrive ere the month is gone.

On the borders of a lustral swamp in the pinelands I hear the parula warbler singing his melody that so exquisitely expresses the spring's sweet insistence. As soon as the fragrantly foliaged sweet-gums begin to bud, the parula can be heard. In these woods, as dusk falls, the chuck-will's-widow will begin his painfully iterant calling. Here, too, at the mystic time of dawn or twilight, the shy veery may flute a few delicious notes, suggesting fragrant fens, and dewy ferns, and the deep-hearted calm of the ancient forest.

On the borders of a wide plantation field that has been wrested from the mighty woods, I see other birds that have heard the "far Paternal Voice." Here the goldfinch flashes in plumage that will soon be wholly nuptial. Dizzily wheeling on tireless wings, great armies of chimney-swifts hunt above the clearing. From the edges of a shadowy thicket I hear the beloved Peabody bird, now in full plumage

and in full song; and I know that ere long he will awake the heart of New England with his clear whistled melody. The white-eyed vireo sings from the borders of the wood, and the Carolina wren gaily from a grove of moss-bannered live-oaks. High in a solitary pine I hear Bachman's finch singing with the lyric abandon of exquisite art. Cardinals are pouring forth their hearts in song. Far over the forest a few late robins wing their way northward.

From coast line to the heart of the mighty forest; from the sea to the distant Carolina mountains; from the delta-ed rivers to the inland hills, the Voice is importunately calling. The world itself hears it and awakens in tremulous emerald light. The living heart hears it, wherever it may beat and in whatever breast; for it is to the heart of Life itself that the Voice of Love is calling.

XIII

JOEL AND THE MARSH-BUCK

BEING at home for a few days, I naturally sought out some of my hunting cronies to get the latest sportlore from them. It was Joel Raybourne who seemed all solemnly jazzed up on the hunting business.

"Have you seen any twenty-point bucks this year, Joel?" I asked.

"Bucks!" he exclaimed, with just a tinge of anger in his voice. "Do you know them marsh-bucks have darned nigh ruined me this season? They've turned the tables on me; I haven't been after them, but they've been after me."

"Taken a fancy to you, have they?"

"To my sweet potato patch. I've got two acres next to the big myrtle thicket behind my house, and it pretty nearly looks like a new-ploughed field."

"Tell me about it," I urged.

Joel told me. And that reminds me of what a regular Methuselah of a deer-hunter drawled out one day when he listened to one of Joel's stories: "Lor-dee!" he exclaimed in his soft, expressive Southern drawl, "can't he tell 'um?" He can. And the beauty

of the thing is that he can tell 'um straight. Now he told me of finding a huge buck dead, apparently of old age, among the lonely sand dunes of Murphy's Island. He described the beauty and symmetry of the horns, and when I went to his house he actually showed me the antlers. Some substantiation, I call that. Therefore, when he began to tell me of this venison and sweet potato curry—this warfare that would back Jack D—— and Georges C—— off the horizon—I knew that the thing was so. A hunter who tells the matter to you straight is the man to grapple to your soul with hoops of steel. For a long time, meaning twenty years or more, I have thus figuratively grappled Joel to me.

"These bucks," Joel was explaining, "aren't the regular deer of the pinelands. I mean that they are larger and burlier. They come to the mainland in the mating season, which is also the sweet potato season; but they are marsh-deer. They spend the whole day in the marsh, and it would take a field-trial hound to bring one out. I have stood on the back beach of one of those sea islands over yonder and have seen as many as five of these big fellows come out of the reeds at one time. They generally come out just about sundown; but last week I saw one in my field, and the sunlight was glinting on his clean-rubbed and polished horns."

"But, see here, Joel," I mildly remonstrated, "what good does all this do us? It seems to me that you haven't said anything yet. You haven't spoken the word. You are like a fellow who takes his best girl

driving and never even holds her hand. You are like a man who talks about juleps when he doesn't have even the smell of one on his premises. You're a sad disappointment, Joel. As a hunter, you're failing in your old age."

"Say when," he answered with an understanding grin.

With such game in prospect, the time to go is usually right away. I, at least, under such circumstances always acquire a heated feeling that some other hunter will slip in ahead of me and steal the whole bankroll, or that the game, by mental telepathy, will get the ouija board word that the devil and all is camping on their trail and will forthwith utterly vanish. Every sportsman knows the alarming feeling. But in this case it was not justified in me, for it really took two unusual fools like Joel and me to plan the thing we did plan; and while demented ones are a crop that never fails in any region, we are of a somewhat padded-cell variety when it comes to deer-hunting, and therefore have not many rivals.

The huge and melancholy marshland which harboured the deer we wanted to get is a formidable kind of place. Indeed, along the whole South Atlantic seaboard it is almost unique, for it is a super sea marsh. Joel said it would take a fine dog to bring a deer out of it, but the fact is a dog will not willingly follow a deer into this marsh. On almost countless occasions I have known deer from the pinelands to make for the great marsh, which they consider a sort of sanctuary, and in almost every instance, regard-

less of how hot the pursuit might be, the result is always the same: as soon as the hounds reached the borders of that mysterious and forbidding domain they would break off the race.

I think the real reason for this is not any weird misgivings that the dogs may have concerning the entering of so strange a place, but rather the mere simple fact that salt marsh is very cruel to a hound's feet. Even the most willing and sagacious dog will be shy of the inevitable punishment which awaits him if he runs a trail into the almost boundless reed-land here described, that stretches many a mile from the coast to the far sea islands. And so fully aware are deer of the discomfort that hounds suffer in pursuing them into this inviolate region that they usually slow down the moment they have passed within its bounds. I once knew an unwounded buck to turn and whip off two perfectly good hounds about a hundred yards inside the marsh.

In planning for our little feat, it was clear that we need lay no scheme for the invasion of the marsh. And in passing I may say that I am most heartily glad for such a place: a region surrounded by hunters, but made by nature safe for game. Whatever Joel and I did would have to be done outside the marsh; and the marauding bucks did not emerge until dusk or thereafter.

"What's your idea, Joel?" I asked. "Are we going to drive them into your barnyard, or are we going to lasso them and gentle them as those fellows in the West do to their wild ponies?"

"You come out to-morrow afternoon at about five o'clock and I'll teach you a lesson in deer-hunting," he answered. "Bring your gun; and, though I don't think you'll get home until morning, you needn't bring your nightie, et cetera."

There is always something peculiarly romantic and alluring about a visit to Joel's home. It is a lonely place, God knows, and being on the coast somehow links it up with the peculiarly vast and ancient wildness of the ocean. His house is surrounded by live-oaks; behind it are fields of cotton, corn, and potatoes; before it stretch the interminable reaches of the savage marsh. Mosquitoes? Great New Jersey! Joel's place is the fountain-head for the true armour-piercing variety. The Disston Saw Works and the Bethlehem Projectile Department and the Savage and the Winchester Arms people ought to go to Joel's and learn a thing or two of hacking and penetrating and destroying. And when I say that I love to go to this solitary plantation despite the pests there, it ought to be understood that there are many compensating charms.

Five o'clock found me and the mosquitoes at Joel's. The things do not bite him—because they are prohibitionists, he says. They ate me alive—ravenously, joyously. But when I am deer-hunting, I don't mind losing a life or two.

"I've got it all built," said Joel.

"The pen?" I asked.

"The platform," he replied. "Now let me explain," he went on, as he saw by my face that I feared

we might be taking liberties with the law, "that this thing is all right. Fire-hunting is prohibited; we are taking no fire. And, if it seems unfair to take advantage of a buck after nightfall, why, just look what these marsh devils have been doing to me for a month past. I won't get enough sweet potatoes from those two acres to flavour a baby 'possum."

"All right," I agreed, "I'll join you; only I hope your platform is out of reach of these mosquitoes."

"They'll likely forage you some," was his comforting answer.

Leaving Joel's house on the borders of the lone marsh we repaired to the invaded potato field, a quarter of a mile away, and ere we reached it the sun of the late October day had sunk below the sea horizon. The atmosphere was cool and clear. The woods bordering the plantation fields were exhaling a damp fragrance, in which the spicy odour of the sweet myrtle prevailed. There was no use for Joel to show me what the deer had done. They were Germans, and they thought his field was Belgium. The lush growth of the vines had been mowed clean. The tall sandy ridges of the rows had been trampled and dishevelled. The crop was undoubtedly badly injured, but I saw that Joel would get something more than he had hinted to me. However, we agreed that the marauders ought to be chastised.

Joel's platform was in a stout scrub pine that was growing on the line of the old rail fence that sagged its way decrepitly along the darksome borders of the forest. The platform itself was of rough boards and

was nailed insecurely to the tree some fifteen feet off the ground. I eyed it appraisingly.

"Our roost," said Joel.

"That's where we'll camp-meet with the mosquitoes, is it?"

"That's where. Let's go up. Not long ago I saw a buck in the field there before this time in the evening. Now, you can't chew or smoke or talk. And you really oughtn't to fight those mosquitoes very rapid. We want to put the Maxim on the sound and motion business."

"All right," I agreed as we began to clamber up the tree. "I have never, of course, seen a deer, but I understand that it is an animal having both eyes and ears."

"You said a spoonful when you said ears," Joel commented.

Soon we were seated on the platform, and I had a curious feeling that there was nothing further for me to do than to sit there and let the mosquitoes bite me. But, in truth, there were not so many at this elevation; besides, there was beginning to creep over me that indefinable thrill that a man feels when he is on a good deer stand. And if ever a place seemed a sure-shot one to me, it was this platform of Joel's overlooking the potato patch and, beyond that, the lonely marshlands where dwelt the gentlemen for whose reception we were prepared.

Sunrise and sundown are the two times of the day when a hunter is most likely to be afforded intimate glimpses of wild life; and I have therefore always

loved to be out early and late. Those are the times to see things retiring into their daytime haunts or coming forth from them, and, usually, there is a naturalness about game at such times that one does not see in it at high noon when it is roused for flight. A man gets a chance to observe what I should call some of the refinement of motion, some of the delicacy of feeding, some of the grace and beauty of behaviour that characterize many forms of wild life when undisturbed.

Twilight found us seated silently on the strange structure among the heavy branches of the burly young pine; twilight with its tints and glows and afterglows faded and left us there. Darkness fell over the wide sea marshes, over the huge oaks surrounding Joel's house, and over the field that lay before us. With the darkness came the voices of the night: the plaintive piping of the plover from the beaches, the human whistling of the curlews and willets; the weird intoning of the great horned owls in the deep forest behind us. Once I heard a fox bark raspingly. A mocking-bird, which is a singer full of song in October, gave a delirious burst of melody. Then a silence settled over the lone country. It was eerie and full of wonder. Suddenly I felt something brush my ear; at the same time a warning hand was laid gently on my arm.

"I hear them coming," said Joel's voice in the faintest whisper. "Get your gun up pretty well now; shoot if you make one out; and don't under-shoot."

"I can shoot," I whispered back, "but who in blazes can see? I can't even see the ground. You do it."

Then, even as I whispered, over the old fence, about thirty yards below us, I distinctly heard a deer come across. How in the world am I to describe a sound so faint, so floating, so characteristic of one of these elusive, shadowy creatures? A burly buck can give the leader of a ballet an object lesson in dainty dancing. I was sure I heard the buck jump over. I heard the soft swish as he landed gently in the tall broom-sedges bordering the fence. I strained my eyes for sight of the deer. But blank darkness filled my gaze. The stars were out, and when I elevated my sight I could distinguish the ragged outline of the trees against the night sky. But the potato field was a reproduction of the Black Hole of Calcutta. I again intimated this fact to Joel. He leaned up against me.

"I see one," he said.

"Shoot!" I urged.

"It will have to be by dead reckoning."

"That won't matter to me."

I shall never forget my tingling feelings as the woodsman beside me raised his gun. I could barely distinguish the barrel by the faint glinting of the starlight upon it. I could hardly tell the direction in which it was pointing. A shape appeared to float into my vision; but as suddenly and as vaguely it vanished. Clearly, we were dealing with phantoms. But then I distinctly heard some animals feeding almost beneath our stand. I heard the soft champ-

ing of succulent leaves and stems; I heard the impatient stamping of browsing deer. My personal experience with phantoms is limited; but I am sure that they do not feed in so material a fashion. Eagerly, yearningly, I tried to make them out. And while I thus struggled mentally and physically to bring the objects into my vision, Joel's gun blared forth on the silence and darkness.

I almost jumped off the platform. But I recovered my balance. The air was filled with acrid fumes. There was a sound of running in the field. Twice I heard short, fierce snorts, and once a weird whistling sound. There was some lively crashing through the myrtles, and then once more silence fell, and a deeper darkness seemed to prevail.

"I got him," Joel announced.

"Are you sure?" I asked. "Did you see him when you shot? Do you think he fell in the field?"

"I had to shoot him by dead reckoning; that is, partly by sight, partly by sound, but mostly by dumb guesswork. Yes; he fell in the field. Let's go down. I guess that's all for to-night. I heard them run all the way to the marsh."

Leaving the tree, we returned to the house and procured two lanterns. Then we came back to the place. Joel led the way to where he thought the buck had fallen. It was as he had said. The deer lay between two potato rows. He was a magnificent animal and in his full prime. His great dark horns bore thirteen clear points. His size was splendid. Joel and I admired him by lantern-light.

had appeared a few hours before; but its aspect was not threatening. However, the alarming report of the newspaper was shortly to be confirmed in a manner which left me no possible reason for doubt. A dusky figure, having crossed the long ricefield banks which bordered the river, now approached me as I stood under a live oak behind the house.

My visitor was Prince Alston, a Negro whose knowledge of the ways of the river is startling in its accuracy. I asked him what he thought of the condition of the Santee, knowing well enough that he had seen no newspaper. Unhesitatingly he gave as his opinion that a big water was on its way down to us. All the banks, he said, would surely be overflowed by the next morning; and by the following afternoon we could paddle in our canoe over the entire delta. He knew the river far better than I, and his ideas concerning its probable behaviour carried more weight with me than the report from Rimini. The official there doubtless had gauges; but Prince had prescience, whose power transcends that of all things mechanical. Acting, therefore, on his belief, we prepared for a flood.

In meeting a somewhat similar emergency, Noah, I believe, built a boat. As we already had several boats, we merely drew these high up on the land and tied them to trees so far away from the water that it appeared impossible to believe that the river could float them. But during the long hours of darkness that were soon to follow, we realized that the wide and rather placid river, would be transformed into a

wild and turbulent torrent sweeping in madness to the sea.

After all the boats had been made secure, Prince and I drove the stock into the barnyard, lest some of the cattle, wandering in the darkness near the river, might be caught and swept away, or drowned in the gross thickets bordering the swamps. After this task, as by now the dusk was falling, there was nothing we might do until the morrow. But more than once during the night I was awake; and I could not only hear the soft rush of the waters over the topped banks, but could actually smell the water; for when a freshet begins to overflow bottom-lands carpeted with leaves and trash, there is given off, especially at night, a pleasant, wild, fresh, rainy odour.

When morning dawned, the prophecy of Prince stood fulfilled. The river had risen ten feet in the night. The boats which we had dragged up so absurdly high were now afloat. The ricefield banks were flowed clear. All the lowlands were flooded. The delta—as much of it as was visible from the plantation landing—was an apparently endless stretch of yellow waters, out of which strangely rose tall trees, indefinitely subdued by being partly submerged, waving canebrakes, drowning elder bushes, and here and there a dry tuft of duck-oats or a futile wisp of sere marsh. From a window high in the house, a window which afforded me an unimpeded view of the wide river country as far as I could see, my eye fell upon the yellow waters, ramping wherever obstructed, the unnatural aspects of the perish-

ing landscape, and the far weird vistas which pictured vaguely the stormy insistence of the mighty flood. Perhaps what made the scene most strange was the fact that the day was calm and bright and warm—a typical midwinter day for that latitude; and yet there were visible those scenes which are usually associated with whatever is wildest in wind and rain. From what I saw I well knew that a day of excitement and strange adventure awaited me.

My first duty was to make sure that the stock was safely in the barnyard; and this matter had my attention. But as I began to walk along the edges of the freshet, one of the first refugees I espied stoutly swimming for shore was one of the many half-wild hogs that people the delta and that are supposed to belong to someone—usually the person who achieves their capture. This particular creature, a gray brute whose high back bristles showed, even as he swam desperately for his life, had come, I supposed, from Lone Pine Ridge, a small hillock standing a mile and a half away across the delta. Despite the heroic effort that he had already made, the hog was swimming with remarkable skill and strength; indeed, all my observation of these creatures as swimmers goes to confirm the belief that, although ordinary land-dwellers, they are genuine experts in the water. Unless by mischance one becomes entangled in tough grass or in strong vines, or is wedged between trees, seldom indeed will one drown. Nor, in difficult places, are these hogs unable to perform masterful manœuvres. Once in a freshet I saw a herd of seven

hogs, marooned on a canebrake hummock that bordered the river, plunge boldly and in concert into the terrible tide, swim upstream for thirty yards, and come safely to land on a much higher hummock. Considering the wild flowing of the waters, the feat was accomplished with cleverness, sanity, and great dispatch. The particular swimmer to which I first referred was halfway across the river before he saw me. I stood among the trees on the shore where he was intending to land, and seeing me, he turned sharply downstream; as far as I could see him, he held to the middle of the river.

Along the edges of the freshet tide there were many interesting, and some amusing, sights. It is always incongruous to see wild life in situations wherein normally it would never be found. In the damp cotton-rows that dipped down to the water there were many Wilson snipe; while in the tumultuous rootings of a potato field, in which hogs had long foraged and steam-shovelled, there were woodcock, squatting sedately and boring assiduously in the soft brown loam. Thus two of the shyest, most secretive, and most intelligent of game birds were, because of the exigencies fashioned by the flood, making themselves absurdly common. In little briar patches and thickets into which the waters were creeping with delicate sibilant whispers, there crouched king rails, little black rails, soras, and swamp-sparrows. Huddled disconsolately beside marshy tussocks and brown cypress knees were scores of swamp-rabbits—gentle, limpid-eyed creatures that appeared to have small

fear of me. These swamp-rabbits, being natives of the marshes and the bogs, are out of their element when they come to land that is really high and dry. Two of them I caught in my hands—a feat that was made possible by the little creatures' inability to dodge cleverly, and by his proneness to run into obstacles. In his native haunts he invariably follows well-beaten paths, in which neither men nor other obstacles oblige him to dodge. And I believe that his eyesight is not so good in the bright sunlight and in open places as is the keen vision of his relative, the cotton-tail. Nor is this defect unaccountable; for, since the swamp-rabbit is a dweller in gross jungles of marsh and cane and wampee, his vision is adjusted to half-lights. Into the dimness of his ordinary home even the brightness of high noon will penetrate but wanly.

My sympathy for all these poor fugitives was heightened when I observed that apparently they had escaped the flood only to fall victims to predatory birds which now were afforded a cruel opportunity to attack them. In the delta of the Santee hawks and eagles are always numerous and active; but they are especially in evidence when there are fires in the pinelands or when there is a freshet in the river. The marauders then concentrate. Both fires and floods are allies of these hunters of the air. Either a fire or a freshet will attract birds of prey within a radius of many miles; and by their constant activity on the smoky borders of a conflagration or on the boggy margins of a flood they appear grimly to rejoice in

the supremacy of their power. For my part, having a gun with me, I dispersed some of these brigands with a curtain of fire, but I knew that my protection of the refugees was imperfect indeed. The hawks and eagles would return as soon as I left, nicely timing their coming with my departure.

And my leaving for the house came sooner than I anticipated; for in the road leading through the cottonfield appeared Prince, paddle in hand. His approach meant my abandoning the freshet edges for the far more exciting diversions to be had in paddling for miles over the wastes of the drowned delta country.

Within a half-hour after my meeting with Prince we were seated in the twelve-foot cypress canoe and were pushing through the tops of the elder bushes on the river bank. We crossed the Santee, forthwith entering a country that might have represented the Pleistocene Age. I mean to say that some of the forms of wild life that we ran across there appeared to belong to the extinct species which haunted the earth thousands of years ago. Although the time was late December, and although with us the alligator is a creature that hibernates, I was not surprised to see, sluggishly swimming on the surface of the waters, between a canebrake top and a raft of sedge packed against a tupelo tree, a scaly monster with cold unblinking eyes.

As we were not twenty feet from this bull alligator, he was in peril; but he was too dazed and numb to regard us intelligently and to act discreetly. Roused

by the waters of the flood, he had been forced out of his obscure winter den and now swam aimlessly on the surface—a drowsing dragon of mediæval size and aspect. As I looked at him and considered his extreme discomfort in the chilly waters, I had an impulse to let him go; but then there came to mind the story of the Bengal tiger that, in a far country, swam ashore exhausted; and of how the man who discovered the creature did not delay in dispatching it—not for the harm it was then capable of doing, but because of the menace it would be when it had recovered its strength. I therefore shot the bull alligator; for while for the moment he might be harmless enough, throughout the long months of the coming spring and summer his reign over a certain part of the delta would have been a hideous festival of cruelty, with many a delicate fawn, many a gentle and beautiful wood-duck, many a lamb and kid falling victims to his voracity.

Beyond the place where the alligator sank, we came to a small grove of druid-like cypresses and let the boat drift rockingly in among the gnarled trunks that, fourteen feet from the ground, were of giant proportions. The age of such trees is a matter of centuries rather than of years; and I could not doubt but that this particular group had been growing there since before the time when the first white man had ever seen the great delta of the Santee, and when the Cherokees and the Seminoles cruised over the freshet waters as Prince and I were now paddling over them. Over the limbs of these trees massive vines of the

muscadine had clambered, while the lithe supple-jack had so banded some limbs that the vines were like rings embedded in the soft wood. Such cypresses, we knew, would probably afford harbourage to refugees from the freshet. Our little period of pausing under those great trees afforded us some of the most interesting observations of our trip. As was to be expected, on account of his faultless eyesight, the first discovery of note was made by Prince, and my failure to observe as quickly as he did might have had disastrous results.

I was just putting out my hand to rest it against one of the cypresses and steady the canoe, when Prince cried out in sudden warning. Instinctively I jerked back my hand, and not a second too soon; for, lying in an indolent coil on a small carpet of dead sedge drifted against the windward bole of the tree, was a five-foot cotton-mouth moccasin. His stout body, from long staining by river-mud, was like the sere colour of the sedge. For a moment, however, as the wide jaws flashed open, a vivid patch of white was momentarily visible. So startling is this sudden flash of white that, since the snake has no other method of warning those who approach it too closely, I have long believed that the cotton of its mouth, if not designed as a warning, at least serves as one. This moccasin had no business to appear in that latitude in December. But, like the alligator, he had been driven forth from his sleeping-place to swim driftingly in the wintry waters and crawl benumbed on the sodden sedge.

I was curious to see whether its hibernating had affected its power to strike, or had reduced the normal portion of its venom. The big snake gave me immediate and convincing information about itself. It appeared sluggish in every way except in the matter of striking. The minute the snake was touched by the paddle, the broad and savage head drew back so quickly that the eye could not follow the movement; the wide jaws yawned; the yellowish-white fangs stood out almost straight.

We came across at least a dozen other moccasins on our trip, and all of them appeared to be in the same condition of torpor; but their drowsiness was of a type from which they could instantly be aroused. With that swiftness that is instinctive with wild life, they reacted to danger. Perhaps their hibernation in the latitude described is, after all, desultory and incomplete. The winter in the Carolinas is often a mere name. In Florida, there is no hibernation of reptiles. Indeed, one of the ordinary diversions of the tourist season in that state is said to be the thrill experienced upon stepping on a seven-foot diamond-back rattler. In the pinelands adjacent to the lower Santee I can record seeing at least one great diamond-back of the coastal wilderness lying before the doorway of his strange den, having been lured forth in mid-January by a spell of summer-like weather.

While I was engaged in testing the moccasin's striking powers, Prince suddenly gave a surprised chuckle of delight. I saw that he was looking up into one of the ancient cypresses and I knew what

this meant, because the smile that wreathed Prince's face was the smile which he reserves for the discovery of a raccoon. In this instance the expanse of his expression of joy could hardly be commensurate with his exultance, for among the forks of the tree were five refugee raccoons! The flood had treed the whole family.

One might suppose that purely wild creatures discovered in the manner described would naturally want to climb higher, or to crouch lower, or at least to eye us sedulously. But the raccoon is the philosopher of the delta. With far more equanimity than a mortal can assume, he accepts all situations. He phlegmatically refuses to recognize a crisis. Being a "borrower of the night" for all its dark hours, he is a profound sleeper during the day; but even when awake and fully aware of approaching enemies, he betrays no emotion. Commonly he curls up in a hollow for his diurnal siesta; but when caught by a flood at some distance from his regular den tree, he will accommodate himself to circumstances. The crotch of a cypress is no mean substitute for a cozy hollow. One of the raccoons was so low down that my paddle could reach it. When poked with the paddle, it gave evidence of being very testy, but showed not the slightest sign of that swift alertness that we associate with the folk of the wild.

As it would have been a far more cruel thing—to Prince—for us to leave all the raccoons than it would have been—to them—to take all of them with us, I compromised with my paddler. He wanted the

whole family; but we took the old male only. In thus abandoning four 'coons in one tree, I suppose my utter lack of financial considerations was shown, for raccoon hides are now worth \$20 apiece. But a man would have to sacrifice some qualities of his heart to take an old female and her young.

Leaving the cypress grove, we pushed off into a wide expanse of open water, and now for the first time we saw what the effects of the flood must be far down the river. One of these was to obliterate the feeding grounds of the migrated wildfowl. Overhead now, in the clear sunlight, flocks of ducks began to stream. All were heading northward toward the river swamps, where feasts of acorns awaited them. The distraction of the ducks was quite evident. They flew much lower than they should fly in full daylight over a man with a gun. In one flock I counted upward of two hundred. Another flock I estimated at a thousand. For a time scores of these flocks were in sight; but in about an hour most of them had passed us by. Other birds there were, flying somewhat aimlessly. There were yellowlegs and willets, Wilson snipe and gallinules, blackbirds in dark myriads, and solitary herons. Many a raft of sedge was black with redwings. Coming to a long canebrake, we followed its edge, and, peering into its green obscurity, I saw many a poor refugee. Rabbits seemed to be on every old stump, on the tops of bushes that were almost flush with the water, on the low-sweeping limbs of trees, and often swimming swiftly in and out of the vistas among the canes.

Tiny marsh-sparrows, no whit dismayed by the high waters, sang merrily. Clapper rails rising with dangling legs and resembling nothing so much as bunches of old rags flew a short distance and then dropped, usually into the water. Many wild hogs passed us, swimming valiantly. Suddenly Prince exclaimed:

"Look yonder! Look yonder—making for the main!"

Far across the level waters my eye caught sight of a tall rack of white-tail deer antlers. A swamp-buck was swimming for the mainland. Even in a line more straight than he could swim, the distance was at least two miles; but the deer was safe in his strength. The declining sun of the afternoon glinted on his polished horns. Though swept somewhat out of his course by the irresistible tide, the swimmer held his direction, and the speed and the power of his swimming were superb.

Near the end of our canebrake we came upon two canoes whose occupants were abroad for the purpose of finding strayed stock. I do not think that they cared whose stock they might happen to find, their object being merely to capture what they could. Of course, they were after hogs. I was glad that they had not seen the buck. For my part, they were welcome to disport themselves after the razorbacks. For a career full of crises, commend me to hog-catching in a freshet—especially when the hunting is done from canoes which have but one natural bent, and that is to turn over. My greeting with these

men was not over cordial, for we were above land that belonged to me. Whether, with fifteen feet of water submerging it, I could claim it, is a question for legal minds rather than for mine.

Prince and I were now seven miles from home, and the afternoon was waning. Besides, such a head-tide as we had would make our progress slow. Northward we turned, to skirt the dark edges of the line of trees on the delta-bank of the river. Northward we paddled, with many a sight of refugees in trees, on sedge, in rustling canebrakes. Always under our frail craft I could sense the mighty movement of the flood.

Dusk was falling as we reached the plantation. It was good to get home again. A cheerful fireside is never so appreciated as when one has come to it from the "tumultuous privacy of storm"—or flood. And a bright hearth meant peace to me after I had been made to feel, through a whole day, the full import of the apparently innocent words, "twenty feet at Rimini."

XV

RINGNECKS IN THE STUBBLE

IT IS one thing to hunt in a strange country and to find strange game; it is an entirely different matter to hunt in familiar territory and run across something in the way of game that you never saw there before—there or anywhere else outside of an aviary. The feeling it gives one is a thriller—making a man feel as he probably would if, when following reedies in the Hackensack marshes, he should flush a wild gobbler. I experienced the emotion last autumn, and there was a mighty cheerful kick to it.

Our State Game Department had been, for some years, liberating some ringneck pheasants in those counties supposed to offer the most congenial conditions for their survival and increase. My own county, Franklin, in the extreme southern part of the State, got some of them. The first of November of last year opened the first season on these birds, but as very few had been reported in our vicinity, I had small hope of being allowed the privilege of saluting any of them.

It was a misty afternoon, and the only wind was an occasional fitful and rainy swish that shook all the raindrops on the trees down on a man's head. But

all day long I had been thinking how my dog would work in the stubble. Quail are likely to be restless on such a day, and a good dog can follow them to perfection. But it was two o'clock in the afternoon before I could jump the traces of work and take to the open. I was alone, preferring that kind of hunting to any other—except when an old-tried comrade can be with me. A run of three miles back into a valley that withdrew from the farmlands, famous in this part of the county because of their richness, brought me to a stretch of hunting land that looked very inviting. As it was viewed from the road it showed an old pasture thickly grown in blackberry canes, then a briared gulley with a small stream in it, then an immense field of wheat stubble, golden against the blue mountains to westward. Clumps of woods rose here and there. It looked birdy to me. Water, stubble, woods, briar patches, dusting-places in the gulley—what more would quail want? And I was after quail. I just happened on the ringnecks.

Leaving the car along the road, my dog and I started up the briared gulley. Evidently no one had been hunting there that season, for five cotton-tails compelled me to hail them. They were strangers and I took them in. I hung them on a rail at the head of a gulley and forthwith entered the big stubble field.

Now, I do not want to describe this little hunt as if I were the original finder of ringnecks, for I realize that there are scores of good hunters to whom the experience must be rather familiar. But perhaps I can

tell the thing in a new way, and mayhap some of the details will be different; for hunting is like a game of chess; you can play it a million times, yet never play any two games all the way through in exactly the same way.

When about two hundred yards into the golden-brown stubble, my dog, a wide-ranging pointer, began to behave in the way that makes a hunter feel that the joy bells are going to ring for him very soon. But clearly the dog was puzzled. I thought, of course, that he was on the track of a covey of quail. But on a damp afternoon, with just the right wind moving, he should have gone straight to the target. Quail do not run much in the stubble, but evidently these birds were different. We followed the track more swiftly than I care to follow and game trail, and ere long reached the crest of the great hill whose sides were clothed in the stubble. As far as I could see, there was not a farmhouse visible. Oh, what a grand and glorious feeling, when hunting in a civilized community, to feel that no one is after you with a pitchfork!

My dog worked on; he drew to a point a hundred yards from me. I moved down. So did he. Then my eyes were opened and a great light dawned upon me—I think that's the way to say it. For out of the short stubble ahead of the dog there arose an old cock ringneck. He made a lot of noise with his wings and with his voice, and his manner of going would make Immelmann and Guynemer and those other great flyers envious. I watched him until my

eyes got tired. Off that hill and down across innumerable other fields he fled. He was smart at this fledging business, or sledging, or whatever you care to call it. I did not see him come to ground. He simply faded away in the distance. And I did not follow; for one of the fields over which he had planed on those mighty wings of his was ploughed. Kind reader, take it from me that one of the simplest ways of losing your religion is to try to cross a half-mile of newly ploughed, nice sticky clay in the juicy month of November. But though I did not follow, I thought hard—which is often what a hunter does when a great chance escapes him. I thought this: that cock-pheasant is no solitary bird. I called to my dog and we began a long circle of the field.

Perhaps three hundred yards from where this pheasant flushed, my dog drew to a sure point. I approached, thinking that another cotton-tail would compel me to 'phone him. But no cotton-tail crouched in the stubble could I see. Yet my dog claimed earnestly that something was there. I looked and then I looked some more. At the end of the some-more gaze, I saw the object of the pointer's attention. It was another cock-pheasant—and not six feet away from me. The rest is easily told. I can only say that such a bird is almost too big to shoot in open country. If a hunter is close on him before he flushes, he has not one chance in a thousand; and I think that all game should have a show at getting away. However, I first shot the bird and then, having bagged him, I considered what a poor

chance he had had. Hunters are human and they like to take home something. I have always thought that there's something pretty guileful about these fellows who say, "Oh, it doesn't matter what we get. It's getting out in the open that we like." For my part, I haven't climbed into that sublimated class as yet, being just a plain hunter who does not care about telling hard-luck stories and looking like a four-flushing piker when his family greets him on his return from the woods and fields.

Considering the behaviour of these two pheasants in the wheat stubble, I am certain that the first one had run a half-mile ahead of the dog, whereas the second one had not run at all. Each had chosen his way of eluding danger, and one had to guess wrong.

Another half-hour in the stubble gave me one more bird and two rabbits. The expected quail were found on the edge of a thicket, and seven were secured; also, some shot at were not secured. It is not easy when the birds are big, when the light is foggy, and when the game goes whirring at cubist and futurist angles over the high briars and scrub locusts. It was now nearly dark, and I turned toward the car, collecting my cotton-tails from the rail fence en route.

Passing down the briared gulley, I came to a haw tree red with its autumn fruit. It seemed a good place to cross the water. As I stooped under the first fringe of thorny boughs, there was a mighty whirr from the other side of the tree, and another big cock-ringneck went rocketing off over my head. Had

the bird been a ruffed grouse, I do not believe I could have stopped him. But my left barrel, having a good reach, brought him down. Perhaps the dampness of the atmosphere prevented his getting all his cylinders to working; I have frequently observed that quail fly less swiftly and with a kind of muffled flight on such days as this one which I have described.

It was about dark when my pointer snuggled down beside me in the car, and all the lights of the village were shining mistily when we drove into town.

XVI

A DAY IN THE PINELAND WILDS

TO BE again in one's boyhood home; to be forty-two miles from a telephone; to stretch one's self in a big armchair before a great fire of pine and live-oak, and to discover, just before dinner, that the plantation had not as yet heard the name of Volstead! Any one of these things should be enough to make a man feel that life was handing him out something pretty fine. But these things were not all, for I had the promise of a long day on the morrow with my brother in the wilds of the Carolina pinelands. It was this prospect more than the distance from city distractions, the genial fire, or the magical bottle of Old '89, that made me feel as carefree and as light-hearted as a lad. It's a good feeling after a man's hair is graying.

It was about six o'clock the next morning when I set forth into the woods. Most deer-hunters of the South like to ride, and occasionally I do the same, but it is so long since I have been able to get a sensible horse for shooting that I prefer walking. In riding up deer, the fact that he is mounted may work against a man; and after a rider has been thrown once or twice, or—worse yet—slammed in

the face by the tossed head of a gun-frightened horse, he is going to take a lasting fancy to walking. An all-day walk in the pinelands is not hard; the going is easy, and usually dry; the country is level; and of course a hunter always does a certain amount of still-hunting, which means, in this case, just sitting down and resting, watching and waiting.

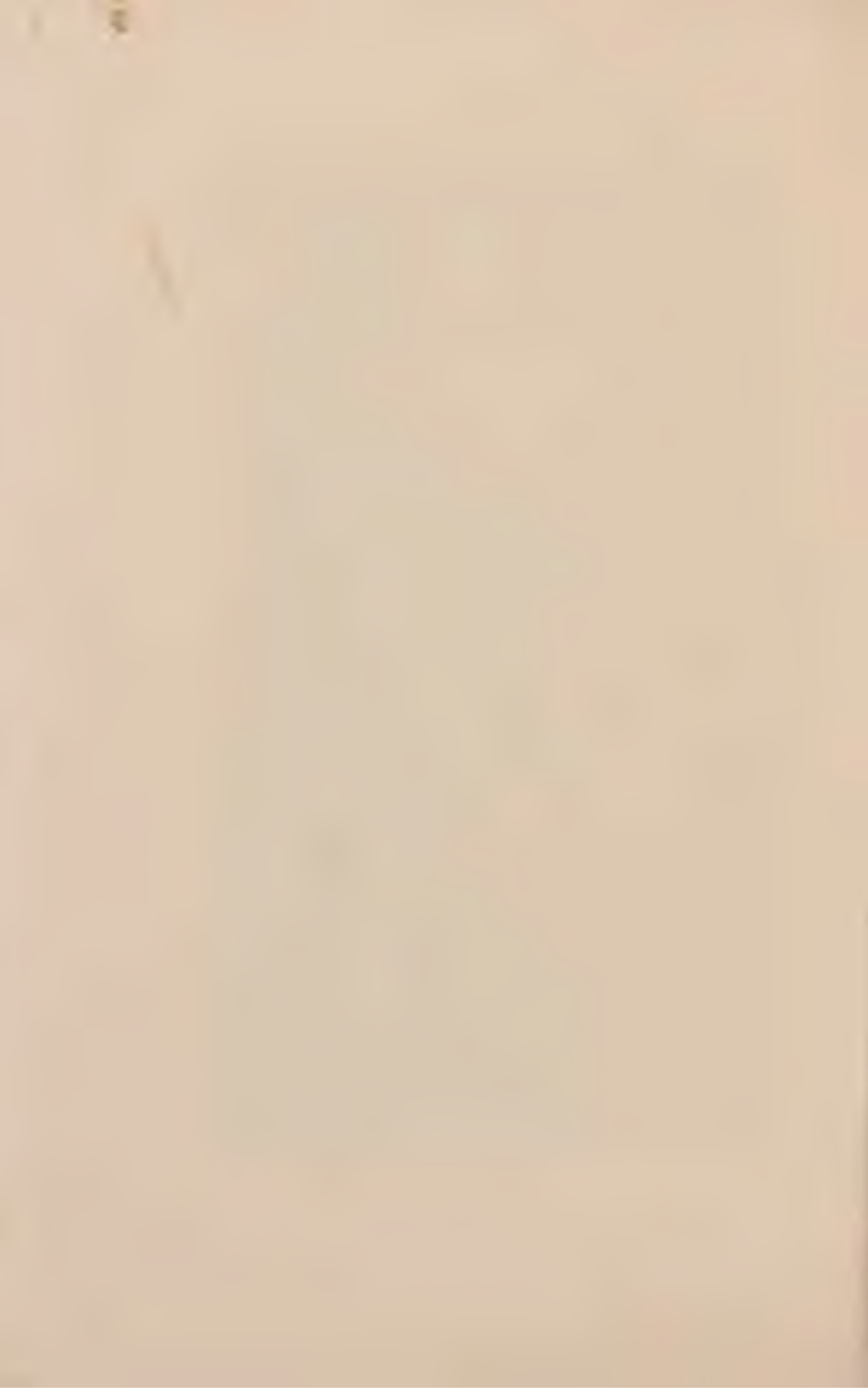
My brother and I, when we reached the plantation gateway, unslung our horns and gave a little sunrise serenade. This was to summon Prince, our Negro henchman, who lives a mile across the ricefield from the plantation house. We seldom hunt without Prince. He manages the hounds, helps us decide where to hunt, drives out the small bays and thickets for us, is willing to grin, even at the end of a hard-luck day, and helps us bring the bacon home and dress it. When we blow for him he leaves his cabin and we always meet by the outer plantation gate. There we hold a regular political conference before beginning the great work of the day.

I shall never forget my feelings that morning. For two days I had been cooped in a dusty, musty sleeper, and I had been looking out on a dismal winter landscape as the train carried me Southward. Now, at last, I was at home. The day was fair, warm, and calm. The air was delicious: it was full of all those spicy and aromatic odours that one gets in October in the North when out after ruffed grouse. As my brother and I walked down the sandy, pine-trashed plantation road thickets of holly, myrtle, scrub-oak, and pine flanked us on either hand. Everything was



Courtesy of "Field and Stream"

Off through the pinelands.



hung with dew that glinted in the light of the rising sun. The thickets were full of birds of all kinds—singing, rustling the dead leaves, and flitting happily here and there. I think a migrant's life is an ideal affair.

"Look here," said my brother, pausing and pointing to the gray sand that had been slightly packed by a shower of the previous afternoon, "I have been telling you that they are here. Tracks don't lie."

I counted them. Four deer had crossed the road in the night. This was not half a mile from the house.

"Don't let's fool with them," my brother said. "They've been here all summer and fall. I have seen them: an old buck, a peg-horn, and two does. There are two fawns, too—born right over there in the big myrtle thicket by the ricefield. But they were not along on this party last night. We ought to keep a few near the house like this—just to give the puppies practice."

We now came into the big road a mile from the house, and there the good Negro Prince met us. He is an unassuming, intelligent, genial darky, and when it comes to deer-hunting, I hardly know his equal for the particular part that he plays.

"I done already see two this morning," he announced. "Come here, Trigger!" he suddenly yelled at a hound. "I bet I will teach you and Hammer for learn a lesson 'bout huntin'!"

"You saw two, Prince?" I asked.

"Yes, sah, 'bout dayclean, going across the rice-field."

"The two fawns I was telling you about," Tom said.

"What about these two dogs?" I asked, eyeing with a little misgiving the two creatures that Prince had brought with him.

"They will run," my brother said; "but they aren't choicy about the kind of game: rabbits, 'coons, deer, sheep, hogs, people, cattle, turkeys, wood-rats—anything that happens along."

"We ought to get one of those varied bags you read about," I said. Again I looked appraisingly at the dogs. I am careful not to call them hounds. Centuries ago, indeed, a hound may have crossed the trail of one of their ancestors, but these two woolly, lean, foxy-faced, savage, suspicious creatures were what in the Santee country we call just plain nigger dogs. As such, I am sure that they were full blooded. Prince smiled upon them broadly and tolerantly.

"Dis one," said Prince, indicating Trigger, "he done get me in trouble no later than last Sunday."

"How so?" Tom asked.

Prince laughed loudly.

"Dat preacher," he explained, "he done was coming over home to talk to me 'bout my sins; dis dog here 'most done eat up the preacher."

"Did he really hurt him?" I inquired.

"He done tear he pants off," Prince explained with exactness; "and all dem gals done been lookin' on."

"Well," said my brother, "we want to see him tear the pants off one of these old men of the woods to-day."

"Let's go down here to Fairfield Hill," I suggested; "we can tell whether anything walked there last night."

Between our gate and Fairfield we counted many fresh deer tracks, but we had an idea that there was a special show waiting for us down the road on the crest of the big white sandhill. It was so. My brother came upon them first. I heard his low whistle of surprise.

"I didn't know that there were so many of this kind left," he said as Prince and I came up. "Just look here. Six crossed here early this morning; and from their blunt hoofs I know that every one is a buck. They are all fine deer."

"Yes," I agreed, just then seeing what Tom had not seen; "six deer and one ox. Look at this track."

There was a huge imprint beyond the others; deep and wide it was, and as it was some distance from the others, I considered it a lone track.

"One of these old solitary swamp-bucks," said my brother. "Prince," he suggested, "see if your coyotes will take his track."

Trigger and Hammer were brought to bear on the plain trail, that in the damp sand looked remarkably fresh, but they gave it not particular notice.

"They have to see something to run it," I mildly remarked to Prince.

"Dey is pretty good on the hot scent, Cap'n," the Negro replied.

"Specially on a preacher's," Tom put in.

"But all this," I said, "reminds me of what old Jake Henderson said a few years ago when he came here from Berkeley County to hunt deer. We had been showing him a lot of signs, and had been bragging of the number of deer we had. 'Well,' he drawled, 'but I ain't lookin' for signs; I'm lookin' for deer.' Let's go after some of these seven."

We struck off to the right through the fragrant pinelands of the calm December morning. The only air that moved was a faint aromatic breeze high up that gently moved the crests of the towering pines. Half a mile off the road we came within sight of a bay-fringed pond. My brother did not speak; but in sign language he told Prince what to do. Then Tom and I tiptoed round to the windward of the dense little piece of cover. In about two minutes, after a few preliminary whistles and shouts, Prince squalled. His voice hits high C whenever he sees a white tail flaunt before him. In this instance he had jumped two deer, a buck and a doe, and the dogs were almost upon them before they left their cover. I hardly had time to slide my safety up before I saw something coming my way. Unfortunately, I had done a foolish thing in taking my stand. Selecting a pine stump for shelter, I had sat down in the broom-grass behind it, with my legs stretched out in the warm sunshine. Now, it is all right for a man to sit on a log, or on some kind of slight elevation.

But when a man is sitting flat down and two deer come tearing along straight for him, with two hounds running almost under them, he is awkwardly placed. Many an old deer-hunter of my acquaintance believes that the steadiest shot at a running deer is made from the knee. How often have I seen a real hunter who, running down a road to cut off a deer, when he reached what he chose as the place to stop, would drop to one knee and a moment later salute correctly the road-jumping cyclone with horns! But I wasn't fixed at all; and I was afraid to move for fear of violently turning the two deer. On they came—a beautiful sight in the dewy morning woods. Their course was straight for me; I was positively embarrassed. I felt as if I ought to get out of the way. And I am telling a true thing when I saw that if I had not been directly behind the big stump, some ten feet high, the deer would probably have jumped over me. As it was they made a slight swerve in deference to the stump, and rushed past me at a distance of about four feet. The buck was in the lead by a yard. I killed him as he was passing me. But it was a crude and boyish shot; and because of my cramped position, and of the fact that I was busily blaming myself for taking it, the shot came near being a miss. However, the male of the species was tumbled over, and in a few minutes my brother and Prince had joined me, and we viewed with satisfaction the fallen stag. He was not a remarkable deer, but he was a fine piece of venison and he was ours. We carried him back to the pond where he had

jumped and there hung him on a stout tree-bay. We got him well off the ground, for in those pinelands there are razorbacks that like nothing so well as a deer that you leave carelessly where they can get hold of it. And you haven't seen a thing properly torn to pieces until you have seen what is left when a gang of these brutes gets through with a deer.

We now struck off westward through the day-brightened pinelands. We were in a tract of virgin timber, and as far as we could see in every direction the huge shafts of yellow pines towered into the blue sky. In walking along through this magnificent stretch of timber we separated; Prince and the dogs took the middle, and my brother and I were about a hundred yards respectively on either side of him. There was little undergrowth, but the broom-sedge was tall, and in this on sunny, still days in winter deer are very fond of bedding. We struck no deer in this stretch, although the three of us counted eleven fresh beds. But I was very much surprised and pleased to see the number of coveys of quail that we flushed just walking along casually. We saw seven coveys in this one reach of the pinelands. These are strictly birds of the woods, and they fly very much farther than quail of cultivated lands. Moreover, it is their habit to make for some swamp or heavy bay when molested. I am sure that, as far as human hunters are concerned, they can take very good care of themselves.

Leaving the big timber we began to cross a ragged

strip of woods that had been logged only two years before. It was full of old pine-tops, tangled vines that had grown over fallen trees, and heavy patches here and there of scrub-oak and young long-leaf pine.

"Better deer country," said my brother to me, "than what we have just been through. A buck loves a pine-top. Let me tell you what Jim Morrison told me the other day: he said that he was lumbering near Wambaw Swamp not long ago, and toward the end of a certain day his men cut down a monster of a short-leaf pine, whose big top he admired very much. The very next morning when he returned to the place he went up to the fallen pine, when out of the dense crest there jumped a fine old buck. He had chosen it for his bed on the first night that it was on the ground."

We decided to let Prince drive out some little pine thickets for us, and Tom and I took up stands with which we have been familiar since boyhood. I had just located myself when I heard one of the hounds give an opening yelp.

"Warm trail," I said to myself; "something's been here since daylight. Of course, it may not be a deer, but they love this place."

About two hundred yards off to my left I heard a wild turkey give one querulous note. I looked over. It was my brother signalling to me to be on the lookout.

Of course, every sportsman has his own ideas of what is the most thrilling moment in the great game

of hunting. And an interesting chapter could be written on these various exciting situations, but to me that moment in life is most interesting when, on a deer-stand in good country, I hear a dog open, and, if I am fortunate, have my brother signal to me to be watchful.

I listened keenly, but no further sounds came from the dogs. That is what comes from not using real hounds. If I had had a good trailer he would have been singing the Song of Songs. The next sound I heard was an astonishing one. In a pine thicket on a small sandy hill about two hundred yards from me four big deer got up, and they got up flying. I believe that Trigger and Hammer had nosed them out of their beds. I never heard so much floundering and so much tumultuous muffled racket. But they did not come our way. Deer have a habit of disappointing one in that respect. As soon as I guessed that they were headed away from my brother and me, I stood on a pine log and watched the four splendid creatures make off through the pinelands. It was a great sight, and it was unusual in that I was permitted to watch them so far. For almost a mile I could see their stiffly erect tails go glimmering off into the distance. But somehow there is less beauty to a hunter in one of these vanishing flags than there is flaunting defiance.

I motioned to Tom, and he came quickly over and joined me.

"There were four," I explained, "and they ran for Boggy Bay. The dogs are after them now."

"Let's go over to where they got up," he said. "Prince must be there now."

Forthwith we entered the little pine thicket, and within a few minutes came upon Prince.

"How close were you?" I asked.

"Been on dem," he said, his disappointment showing in his honest face. "Oh, look out!" he suddenly cried.

I caught in the corner of my left eye the flash of a white tail. It was not thirty yards off, but the thicket was dense. Running to the edge of it I saw two more deer making off. These six had been lying up there together, and these two had probably jumped up with the first four; but they had not decamped until we obliged them to.

By this time the two so-called dogs returned.

"They probably lost sight of the deer," my brother suggested with mild sarcasm. "These two other deer were plenty close enough for us to shoot if we had had clear woods."

"I think they have gone into the Briar Bed," I said. "Why not let Prince go round by the Rattlesnake Branch, while we take up the two stands on the road?"

To this plan we agreed; whistling to the dogs we made off through the woods to the westward. Our way led through the timber slashing, which is unlike similar places in the North and West in that no wilderness of sprouts succeeds the removal of the big timber. We saw deer signs innumerable, and we saw more than mere signs, for once, a hundred

yards from us, an old doe and her yet unweaned fawn rocked out of a patch of huckleberries. It was a pretty sight to see them going.

My brother paused by a stout scrub-oak tree under which the ground was bare to show me something.

"I think he was here last night," he said; "see where this old buck has raked and pawed this ground. This is a sure sign that he is still running. The fact is, I am sure, that our deer continue to mate until January is nearly gone."

When we came out into the big road on which we were to stand, Prince left us to take a big circle in the wildwoods beyond us known as the Briar Bed. He would return to us, bringing, we hoped, something in front of him. My brother and I walked down the sunny road which stretched for many a mile straight through the glimmering pinewoods. We were the only people on that lonely road, and perhaps a week might pass without another human being passing that way. But it is a road over which deer cross by the hundreds every day and night. The largest number ever recorded as having crossed it as a herd was twenty-five. This phenomenal sight occurred about twenty years ago, at a time when the Santee River was in flood, and when doubtless many swamp deer had joined their fellows of the open woods.

We came to a gurgling wood-stream that flowed under a wooden bridge spanning the road. As we were within easy reach of our stands, we sat down on the bridge to eat our lunch and to talk of the

old days of our boyhood, when we had many a time hunted in these very same drives near this bridge. I recalled having had a bunch of thirty-five wild turkeys walk out to me on the stand just beyond the watercourse, and Tom remembered the ensuing bombardment. Those turkeys were so bewildered that I actually got seven shots before they cleared themselves. But don't imagine that I got seven turkeys. My brother reminded me of the double that he had made on bucks near a small pond visible from where we were sitting. He shot both down, whereupon each one got up and sailed away in a discouragingly sprightly fashion. But we overhauled them. One had been shot through the heart, and one across the spine.

We had been on the bridge half an hour before we heard Prince. He was as yet far off, and he had roused nothing, but he was coming toward us; therefore we separated and took up our stands. I sat on an old pine log and drank in the sunshine; any man can stand the grind of office life if he has the memory or the prospect of a few days a year of sunshine-drinking.

When Prince was half a mile immediately in front of me I suddenly heard him squall. It meant that he had started deer. Then I heard the alleged dogs, but they were going in the wrong direction. I was sorry, for I wanted Tom to shoot. He must have wished to accommodate me because off to my left beyond the watercourse and the bridge I heard his gun—one barrel and then another.

"Two barrels from him call for two deer," I said, quitting my stand to join him.

When I came up he was standing in the road. But I saw no deer.

"It's all right," he said, not in the least excited. "A big peg-horn tried to pass me on my left here. It was about a seventy-five-yard shot, but we'll get him. I saw him change his stride; you know what that means."

"I know what black blood means, too," I told him, pointing to the trail of it crossing the white sand of the road.

"Let him lie down," my brother advised. "When Prince comes with the dogs we can get him."

Within five minutes the Negro appeared, and to him we explained the situation. The dogs actually seemed to want to take the trail; it was because of the blood. I took a circle in the woods; Tom and Prince then turned the dogs loose. Within three minutes they bounced the buck, and in half as many more he was down. When we examined him we found that two buckshot had struck him, one in the paunch and one in the neck—either one fatal.

We now had two deer, and the afternoon sun was slanting. I looked inquiringly at my brother.

"Home for to-day," he said; "by the time we get these two dressed it will be dark."

We knew a Negro living near, and we borrowed his horse and wagon to take the deer home; the second one we picked up as we neared the bounds of the plantation. One further incident enlivened the clos-

ing day. Just outside the plantation gateway Trigger suddenly swerved to the left toward a small branch grown densely to sweet bays. On the edge of it he jumped three beautiful deer—an old buck and two does. They were hardly a hundred yards from the road and in full sight. They started head-on for the road; then they checked up and did a little flirtation dance; pressed by Trigger, who had now been joined by Hammer, they whirled broadside and did some spectacular jumping—fake jumping, I call it. They turned for the road again, and again they shied. I never saw deer play so prettily and so jauntily. Both Tom and I had our guns ready, but something restrained us. The shot would have been a long one, and then, we already had two bucks for that day. For at least five minutes the deer played with the dogs; then the buck must have spied us clearly, or else winded us. He whirled, laid his great head back on his broad shoulders, and went tearing in earnest through the bay-thicket. His two consorts followed him with graceful speed. We saw them once more when they emerged from the covert and crossed an open pine ridge.

“It’s good to see them, isn’t it?” Tom asked; “it’s almost as good as bagging them.”

“Yes, Cap’n,” Prince said; “but it ain’t so good to see one gittin’ away if you ain’t got none to ’company you home.”

XVII

BAGGING GAME WITH BUCKSHOT

LET me begin by confessing frankly that I know little or nothing of the technical end of ballistics. The subject interests me only from a practical side. Having a good many years used buckshot in a variety of guns, and having kept a record of the results of certain charges in certain guns, I think it will be possible for me to say something of interest on the manner in which a shotgun handles a charge of buckshot. My experience in this matter has been gained chiefly through deer and turkey shooting in the South, where, on account of the level nature of the woods, the highpower rifle is in some disfavour.

There is no doubt in my mind that the 12-gauge gun with the long barrel handles buckshot best. I have never been willing in deer-hunting to use a gun with barrels under 30 inches in length; and my most effective work was done some years ago, with a Westley-Richards muzzle loader, with 32-inch barrels. A much longer gun is liable to be unwieldy; but, at least up to 34 inches, I think the effectiveness of buckshot is, other things being right, in direct proportion to the length of the gun barrel.

Of course, I am presuming that the bore is the

proper one and that the aim of the sportsman is all that it should be. Naturally, almost any gun will, say within a range of thirty yards, shoot buckshot to kill and will place the charge with a fair degree of accuracy. But the satisfying gun is the one that will talk business to a stalwart buck at eighty yards; and such a gun is always one whose length of barrel insures the proper reaching power.

Guns of 10 and 8 gauge, and guns of 16 and 20 gauge have, on certain occasions, the advantage over the 12-gauges; but for a regular buckshot handler, I would consider none but the 12. Given the right charge, this gun, if it is properly bored and has the right barrel length, can be trusted to do the work expected.

The proper charge, experience seems to show, is $3\frac{1}{2}$ drams of good smokeless powder on which are wadded either 12 or 24 buckshot, depending on whether the hunter prefers the big blue whistlers or the low-moulds. Many deer and turkey hunters are scrupulous to load their own shells, or to have them skilfully hand-loaded by an expert in the business. These men nearly always use a priming of black powder, for that has an infallibility that smokeless, admirable as it is, has never acquired.

Some hunters continue to use the brass shells; and these will take none but black powder. I find among many old hunters of the mountains of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina that there is an aversion to smokeless powder. Of course, there is small justification for this; nevertheless, it is a fact.

Of the two kinds of shot, the larger are better for long-distance shooting. The low-moulds give a man a better all-round chance for consistent killing. I know several old hunters who will never use anything else; and the tendency appears to be now toward smaller shot than was used fifteen or twenty years ago. There is a certain type of low-mould, now much in vogue in the South, that, for its size, is exceedingly leady and heavy. Its penetrating power is considerable; and it therefore is a very useful shot.

For my part I carry my gun with low-moulds in the open barrel and with blue whistlers in the full-choke. Then I find myself ready for a long or a close shot. Besides, so loaded, a man has a chance with the smaller charge at a turkey that the use of the big shot would not afford.

That this arrangement enables one to make a long shot on short notice may be attested by the following experience. One day late in September I was sitting on a pine log in the woods of coastal South Carolina. A deer drive was supposed to be coming in my direction, but though I could hear the far-off shouts of the driver, no sound of a trailing dog was heard. The green of the pinewood undergrowth was quite dense on all sides, but at some distance to my left there was an opening in the woods.

While my eye happened to be resting on this place, into it there suddenly jumped a fine deer. The creature was making one of those tentative, elusive, skulking, I'm-going-to-get-away-with-it jumps. In the

fractional pause between two such forward movements I threw my gun up and fired. The shot was foolishly far and I hardly expected to do anything. However, I could not see the deer go on. That usually means something; though sometimes, with a crafty old buck, it may mean only crouching.

Hurrying forward, I soon reached the place. There I found the fine animal down. A single big buckshot had broken the spinal column. This particular shot was made with the Westley-Richards gun already referred to. The distance, carefully measured, was 110 yards. Of course, the success of the shot was due to the fact that one buckshot out of twelve had struck in the place where it could do the most vital and immediate damage. No other shot went home to its target.

A deer of the size just mentioned offers, within reasonable distance, a mighty big target. But, as will here be seen, a wild turkey is a different critter in that respect. One day I was standing in an open thicket of young scrub-oaks. I was waiting for deer. A fine rain was falling, a gusty but gentle wind blowing. The dead leaves on the oaks made much rustling.

Suddenly I was aware of a famous old gobbler standing up in the woods at just about forty yards away from me. He had walked out without my perceiving him. Unfortunately, I had big buckshot in both barrels; and inasmuch as the turkey had made me out, I had to shoot, and shoot quickly. The fine bird had come to an old pineland road and

was standing there. I knew if I tried to change my shells, he would be gone before the shift could be accomplished.

I drew my gun up slowly, took deliberate aim, and fired. The gobbler rose unhurt. After it rose my other barrel of buckshot. However, though I was certain of the aim, I was exceedingly doubtful of bringing down the game. The great bird went off in his grand flight, apparently untouched by either barrel.

Under such circumstances one is forced to conclude that the shot did not pattern for the target. It was my own fault; for I was using buckshot in a brush gun with 26-inch barrels. With 30-inch barrels, even shooting the big shot mentioned, I am sure that something would have been "obleged to die."

It was at this very stand, a few days later, that my father was standing when two great buck ran out to him. We were hunting inside our plantation pasture, not a half-mile from the house; and these two sly old rascals had been eating the peas and corn all summer. They had pretty nearly cleaned up one patch of sweet potatoes, whose vines they ravenously relish, and had actually dug some of our peanuts out of the ground; we were therefore on their trail with malice aforethought.

The hounds jumped before my father and I were fairly at the critical places; and he merely had time to slink against a pine when the thicket became full of white tails, tall antlers, and big, forward-pointing ears. The first buck was brought to earth at thirty

yards with a load of blue whistlers. The second, by far the larger of the two—who had sent the smaller one ahead to take a sample of the danger—veered sharply off.

In the left barrel of my father's 26-inch Dailey gun was a turkey-shot shell, loaded with B.B.'s. The buck was quartering away about fifty yards when the terrible message reached him. Down he came. When I ran up, both bucks were struggling on the ground. I managed to get the forefoot of the smaller one over his horn, thus insuring his staying put.

By this time the monster had disappeared. But he had gone only about a hundred yards. The full charge of turkey-shot had caught him in the paunch, ranging forward. When we skinned him, I tried to count the shot holes, but it was impossible; there must have been at least forty. If a depth bomb had exploded inside him, he could hardly have had his vitals more hopelessly confused.

Since that day I have had great respect for turkey-shot as a deer-killer, if the range is close and if the charge is delivered in the right place. And since then I have more than once killed deer with B.B.'s, preferring them to buckshot when the distance is short.

However, even with the heaviest buckshot, it is not always that a buck will be brought down promptly, even when every shot goes home. In December, 1918, I was hunting with four men, to one of whom a very splendid buck skulked up. I say "skulked," for he had not started to run. He was doing what

old hunters call "reading his book." He was just pussyfooting along and guessing his way to escape.

This approach brought him broadside within fifteen steps of a good shot. A full charge of blue whistlers, twelve in number, spattered the buck from his shoulder backward. Any one of at least six shots would have eventually proved mortal. But the big creature, with a masterly spirit, began what looked like a grand race. This, however, terminated abruptly, for he collapsed in one of his mighty bounds.

On the same day on which this buck was killed, another broke cover far away on my left; so far, indeed, that the gun that had been thrown to my shoulder was lowered. Then I threw it up again. At the first barrel, the buck turned straight away from me; whereupon I gave him the choke-barrel and the whistlers. He continued on his course. But within a hundred yards I saw him stop. He took a few steps forward. Then I saw him no more. On coming up, I found him quite dead.

Two buckshot from the broadside shot had gone deep. And two from the second shot had reached him, one in the point of either haunch and ranging far forward. This kind of criss-cross business was too much for the old fellow. Had he been able to express his feelings, he might have said that he was willing to give up when a hunter double-crossed him in the mean manner described.

However effective buckshot may be, there are times when a man has to stand with his gun in his

hands and watch a deer get away; whereas, if he had a rifle, the story would be different. I remember seeing the contrast between the reaching power of a shotgun and a rifle prettily illustrated one day in the Southern pinelands.

Among our party was the wife of one of the hunters; a good sportswoman she was too. She insisted on using a rifle, as that had been her arm in the Adirondacks and in Maine. In a certain drive a buck with only one horn—he had just dropped the other—came out with the pack in full cry after him. He was an odd sight running through the woods, with that one antler, flying ahead of the clamouring hounds.

His course was peculiar in that he ran broadside to all the standers. He was just about a hundred yards away and going on high gear. A hundred yards with buckshot is a very dubious distance; but every stander—there were five—shot at the buck. The last stander was the Nimrodess. As the untouched buck sailed through the pines, she let drive one shot from her rather dainty rifle. The buck almost turned a back-somersault in his convulsion. The soft-nosed bullet had patterned for his heart.

The manly male hunters were a sheepish-looking crowd, for sure. As for me, I begged the fair huntress for the single horn; and for many years I kept it for the sake of romantic interest. I do not know that I ever saw a cleaner shot at a running deer.

It not infrequently happens that deer suffer broken legs from buckshot, yet escape the hunters. These

deer usually recover. I have seen one that had no leg below the knee, another that had no foot. Such deer can run remarkably well. However, it stands to reason that where hounds are used and buckshot, fewer deer escape and die.

XVIII

A HUNT WITH THE OAKLAND PACK

WHEN you dress on the train on Friday morning, be sure to put on your hunting suit, for we are going straight from the station to the Oakland Club, twenty miles across New Bridge."

This sentence in a letter from my brother down in Carolina sounded good to me; wherefore, when the porter bawled me out at Lanes, I packed away my Sunday suit and climbed into my old field equipment. Then, while the A. C. L. train, running an hour late, tried to make up that time between Lanes and Charleston, I had some breakfast, and while so doing looked out at a type of landscape familiar to me and loved by me since boyhood. Moreover, we were running through country which I knew well: by Mount Holly, Otranto, over the Santee River, by Ten Mile Hill, and so at length across the marshes and into the city.

My brother met me with his car, and within fifteen minutes after my arrival we two—boys again, and that's a good thing—were speeding out of the city's western limits. An invitation had come to us to hunt on the lands of the Charleston Mining Com-

pany, which controls thousands of acres of land beneath the surface soil of which lie rich deposits of phosphate rock. The Oakland Club leases a very large tract of this land, most of which lies between the A. C. L. tracks and the coast. My brother told me that likely the hunt would have started before we arrived, for an early start is the kind of start to make in Southern deer-hunting.

In leaving Pennsylvania the day before, I had had a blizzard hard at my heels; therefore to me that twenty-mile drive through fragrance and sunshine, along a level road overarched with huge live-oaks and massive pines, was like a trip into an entirely different world. Several times along the road we stopped to notice where deer had crossed in the sand; and once we saw the tracks of an old gobbler that wore No. 10's.

Turning into Bear Swamp Road, we ran for about a mile toward the coast; then a little to our left we saw the hunting party, gathered in the quiet sunshine under the pines, waiting for our arrival. They had taken one drive, and had killed two deer, which were hanging near by on oak saplings. The hunters had decided not to hunt further until we joined them. In this group of men were some who during the past twenty years have added a great deal to the sport lore of Charleston, and have given to deer-hunting in that region a great deal of high distinction. Such hunters as James Davis and E. H. Hutchinson were there—men whose association with the hunting game confers on it intelligence, dignity, and the best of



Courtesy of "Field and Stream"

Hunting cronies ready for sport.

fellowship. There were, to manage the great Oakland Pack with which we were to hunt, three Negro drivers, who were mounted. The chief of these dusky scouts was one Henry Washington, a Negro who knows horses, dogs, and deer; who has a voice that carries miles; and who would rather hunt than sleep in the sun—the utmost compliment for activity that can be paid a Negro.

The pack of hounds, which immediately held my admiration, was in some respects a motley crew; they varied in size, in shape, in colour, and in disposition. From plain dogs they ranged upward until I saw there a pair of the finest English deerhounds on this side of the Atlantic. These dogs my father had purchased for the Club in the mountains of western North Carolina, where a very fine type of foxhound and deerhound is bred. The pack, some eighteen in number, was exceedingly restless, for it had already tasted the fruits of sport. My brother pointed out to me several of the more famous dogs: Hammer and Trigger made a great pair, and Check and Mate likewise. There was Old Sked, a dog that had just recovered from a terrible ordeal. His owner, E. H. Hutchinson, missed him one day on a hunt, and for twelve days thereafter the hound did not appear. Finally, a Negro came to him to say that strange noises, which he did not care about investigating, were coming from a certain very lonely part of the swamp. Upon going to the place, the hunter discovered his lost dog. The poor creature had fallen into an abandoned well and had been there twelve days.

His condition was pitiful; but after careful feeding and nursing, he came around all right; and now he can bounce a buck out of his bed and make him show his stride the same as he always did.

When we were ready to start for our drive, the Negro Henry, mounted on a sure-footed red pony, whirled a lash of dazzling length and made it crack startlingly above the heads of the dogs. At once they began to throng toward him, heavy-eared, intelligent heads lifted, long tails waving joyously. The drivers and the dogs took one course; we took another, knowing well that when we again should meet we ought to have something interesting to report.

In going to the stands, I had as my companion "Judge" Hutchinson, as he is affectionately called; and while my many years of deer-hunting in the South have made me feel that I fairly well understand the business, I surely learned something that day. As we passed down an old bank, overarched by sweet myrtles, he paused to point out several places where bucks had rubbed, and where the old boys had pawed the ground, and where, shielded by night and this remote solitude, they had met the does. There is something mysterious about a trysting-place of this kind; and I was quite fascinated by it and by my comrade's talk.

"Right ahead there," he said, "where the bank makes that bend around to the left, I saw the funniest thing happen that I ever knew to happen in the woods. That Negro, Henry, and I were following

the track of a fine buck. He was walking and I was mounted. We had two dogs with us, and we were right up with them. As we came out of the hollow there on the right and reached this path on the bank, the two dogs got right up to the deer—they got in the bed with him. He was lying in a clump of bushes right on the edge of the bank. Well, the first thing I knew, the big buck had jumped right square on Henry. He had to go somewhere, and as the dogs were reaching for his tail, he was not so particular. The Negro was knocked flat, and the buck, too, fell headlong over the side of the bank. The only thing that kept the stag from being laid out unconscious was that his head didn't meet Henry's fairly. For a minute or two I could see nothing on the bank but a scramble of Henrys and bucks. My horse turned around as if it had a fit, I meanwhile trying to get my gun on the deer. But the wise old fellow cleared himself, and my shot went wild. Henry was none the worse for having been run over. I think he probably holds the record for having been jumped on in this way by an unwounded buck."

During our progress we had been dropping off the standers one by one. It now came my turn to be left.

"Right here," said "Judge"; "this is their Rialto. Henry will come with the dogs straight through here; and the old buck ahead of them will either run this old path on your left, or will come out through that little clump of pines yonder. I killed a big one here last week. There are the dogs now."

In an instant this good hunter had left me and had returned to a stand down the bank.

The scene about me was wonderful in its wild and fragrant beauty, but with twenty hounds making music in front of me, I had small time to take in the scenery. My object was to locate myself, and then to keep my eye on the two runways that the "Judge" had pointed out to me. Standing under a small rosemary pine, whose limbs were some seven feet from the ground, I awaited developments. Immediately to my right were some tall dead weeds. Several of these I broke off so that an unobstructed view would be afforded of the crossing on that side. By this time the hounds were beginning to warm up. Their voices were remarkably varied; there were deep baritones, grieving tenors, and just plain barks. Above the rising tumult and controlling it I distinguished the voice of the Negro Henry. He cajoled, admonished, encouraged, berated, and all in a far-carrying melodious voice. To control a big pack of hounds in woodlands so wild that even an old buck is sometimes embarrassed in breaking through is a high art; but the necessary skill for this Henry possessed. He could ride in the whirlwind, and direct the storm.

The ever-increasing volume of music lacked as yet that assured and confident tone that means that the deer are up. But I knew that the dogs were close to the bedded animals. From me the hounds were now distant only about three hundred yards.

I opened my gun and for a last time looked at the

shells. I was, of course, using buckshot, as rifles are taboo in the level woods of the South. I had some shells in which I had the greatest confidence. They were high-base Arrows, with $3\frac{3}{4}$ Ballistite under a charge of 16 medium-heavy buckshot, chambering four to a layer. Even while my gun was open, I heard a sudden warning shout from Henry. The deer were up, and unless some miracle turned them, I knew from the direction immediately taken by the pack that my stand would soon be the scene of their crossing. I was in strange woods and having left a long train journey not two hours before, I was conscious of nervousness. Besides, my shot, if the chance offered, would have to be very quick, taken while the deer was jumping over the old bank; for he would emerge from the pine thicket to enter forthwith the tall myrtles beyond. I waited in quiet excitement, marvelling the while over the wonderfully sweet chiming of the dogs' voices. They were no longer tuning up now; they were making woodland melodies to which the hunter's heart can listen long after the music is stilled.

I was looking for a shape; I was waiting to hear some movement which would indicate on which side the deer would run. Suddenly I both saw and heard it. A fine white-tail was coming through the pine thicket. In the second necessary for the manœuvre I had thrown my gun into the opening which guarded the crossing. If the "Judge," in posting me there, had pointed my gun for me and said, "Hold it for that spot," he could not have given me clearer

directions. I pulled on him and over he rolled into the myrtles and soft grasses that fringed the bank. Almost as soon as I reached the deer the dogs were upon the scene, and as I was a stranger to them, I had somewhat of a picnic keeping them off the fallen quarry until Henry, riding like a wild Indian, broke through the heavy thicket and began to crack his long whip over the excited pack.

This was a fine deer that had been shot; and, despite the objections that many hunters raise to the use of buckshot, I here found, and have always found, that a proper buckshot charge is sometimes a lifesaver for a hunter who has to shoot very quickly. Nor have I any quarrel with the nature of the work accomplished by buckshot when the range is not excessive. To support this I may say that my brother has a record of fifteen straight shots at deer, all killed with buckshot. A little later on this same trip that I am describing I had the good fortune to walk up at twilight one day an old, old stag. He crashed out of a bay-branch far ahead of me and I gave him the choke barrel at a distance that appeared to me hopeless. The buck, a very fine animal, was stopped dead by two buckshot that entered the small of his back just forward of the haunches and ranged clear up through his body, through his neck, and finally lodged behind his jaws. The distance, carefully measured, was 89 steps, not under 80 yards. The gun was a 12-gauge Parker, with 30-inch barrels. The shell was of the type already described. Of course, my hitting the deer in a vital place was the

purest chance, but certainly no rifle could have done more completely the work required.

While I was examining the deer I had just shot, the other standers came up, and one of them remarked that twenty-four hours before that white-tail and I had been nearly a thousand miles apart. It did seem rather remarkable that good luck should have come to me so quickly and so directly after that long journey.

Within a few minutes the drivers had called off the dogs and we were being posted for another drive. My stand was on the edge of a forlorn cotton-patch, an acre in area, surrounded by the wildest forest imaginable. However, not far off the Mining Company had a railroad, and the freights were constantly passing. I was told by two of our party that the deer did not seem to mind the trains, not even the hectic shrieking of the whistles nor the shrill grinding of the brakes and flanges against the rails. Mr. James Davis said that on two occasions, when he had been riding a freight to attend to some business in a remote section of the company's holdings, he had seen deer lying down near the railroad track, and that the passing train in no way disturbed them. Of course, a railroad running through a hunting preserve is a nuisance in that it disturbs the hunters by shutting off, by long freights, some of the best crossings at those times when deer are headed for them, and also by making a place more or less public. On this stand, as the dogs were far off when they were put in, I had a chance to look for signs, and I found the

cottonfield full of them. The place was tracked from end to end. To such a haunt deer love to resort at night. They appear to like the free sky over them. In summer they like a cottonfield for a far less romantic reason. In a thicket near my stand I found in my quiet little prowling the skeleton of an old buck that probably had died or had been killed the year before. Only one antler remained on the skull, the other having in some manner been broken away.

I was not allowed much time for further inspection of these interesting premises; for, far away, echoing high over the great pines that towered dreamily in that lone Carolina forest, the great Oakland Pack was again making overtures that meant a prelude to a grand march. This time, however, the hounds, after jumping, ran a long way to my left, so that I did not see them. But I had a good opportunity to hear them broadside, and to distinguish in their varying voices about a dozen different kinds of eagerness. About half a mile away I heard a single shot. Several minutes later, before the hushing of the pack would have indicated to me the import of the matter, one of the Negro drivers, circling the thicket through which the dogs had run, rode near me. He was talking joyously to himself, and the mixed metaphors are his own.

"Go on hyar, you fool mule. Ain't you done hear dat shooting? Git out ob dis hyar place, you swunged-tail rabbit. Put on de pot, mule; de 'Judge' done shoot."

Such a compliment, paid to a man who deserves

it, was of a type that a Negro knows well enough how to pay; nor do you ever find one of these dusky hunters handing out such unfeigned eulogies to the wrong man.

As we gathered in a broom-grass field, which a deer had foolishly attempted to cross, since that route lay across the stand of the "Judge," we found the successful hunter standing modestly by his deer, while a few yards off, Henry was lecturing to the hounds in a certain violently affectionate way peculiar to him. He was telling them that they had done their part well; and their happy yowling and pleased whining showed that the driver had put across to them his meaning.

XIX

NOTES ON HUNTING HORNS

THE hunting horn has behind it glorious traditions of sport; indeed, it has a loftier lineage than that conferred by the chase; for among the lusty fighters of the Middle Ages the blowing horn was not infrequently used for the giving of signals in battle. Everyone knows that the heroic Roland, in the desperate struggle in the Pass of Roncesvalles, kept blowing his mighty horn so that his followers could rally to him. Of course, precise historians might say that Roland blew a trumpet or a bugle; but all the paintings I have ever seen of him showed him winding a horn that looked as if it might have been taken from a wide-horned Texas steer.

With the invention and general use of gunpowder there came a great run on horns for powder flasks; and as such they were ideal. Some of these were carved with the most elaborate grace and skill; and to-day are among the rarest trophies in the cabinets of collectors. I have seen a powder horn with the whole Declaration of Independence carefully graven upon it. Another had a scene upon it picturing Custer's Massacre. But the powder horn that impressed me more than any other that I ever saw was a plain

black horn with the initials "F. M." This horn had belonged to the famous Colonial partisan fighter, Francis Marion, and was carried by him throughout the struggles of the Revolution, in which, it will be recalled, he played a most honourable part as the "Swamp Fox" who tormented and eluded Colonel Tarleton.

But the powder horn vanished with the passing of the muzzle-loader, and now is to be found only in the den of a sportsman, or in collections of antiques and curios. For a time it appeared that hunting horns of the blowing variety would also pass out of notice and importance, but within the past few years there has been a great revival of interest in them. I venture to say that there are more beautiful horns now being made and sold, and that the number is greater than was the case twenty years ago. Nowadays, makers of blowing horns can select the finest specimens from the great stockyards, and employing skilled artisans, are able to offer the public horns that are shapely, highly polished, and easy to blow. Indeed, these modern horns are made in all tones, so that the purchaser can get a bass or a tenor, as he prefers. Nor is it now a painful matter to blow one of these horns. Some even have a metal membrane fixed in the stem or throat so as to make blowing as easy as it is with a metal horn.

Hunting horns have always been popular in the South, and a deer-hunter without a horn is an oddity. Nothing in the world so effectively calls dogs; and, for that matter, men, too. In many parts of the

South a regular system of horn-calls is observed. For example, the members of one large hunting club understand that two blows mean "Come to me." Three blows mean "Stay where you are." One long blow means "Move on to the meeting place." In different sections the meanings of the blows vary much.

As the voice of a deep-toned dog is heard farther away than the voice of a "grieving tenor," so a deep-toned horn carries sound the loudest and farthest. In silent woods, or with a gentle wind blowing toward the listener, a good horn can be heard distinctly for at least four miles; and if all conditions, including the ears of the listener, be just right, the distance can be greatly increased. How invaluable, then, to hunters is the good old fox horn! And it is a wonder to me that it is not in more general use. Hunting in the Pennsylvania mountains and listening to some of the wild, weird, and hopeless communicating sounds of some of the hunters, I think what effort and trouble they could save themselves by using horns. Besides, game is not half so leery of a horn as it is of the human voice. I know for a fact that a deer will hardly notice a horn blown near where he lies bedded for the day. On the other hand, there is hardly another device to excite so admirably a lot of dogs, be they hounds or just varmint-hunters. Nor can they be controlled better from a distance than by the far-resounding horn.

It may be because the sound of a horn awakes old boyhood memories of sport in me, but certainly I

know that this kind of mellow music never fails to thrill me; for even though I may be listening to the horn of an alien hunter, I can enter into the spirit of his sport, can follow his designs, and can enjoy the fun of the whole business with him.

As long as I live I hope to be able to see clearly and to hear accurately; to hear that I may listen to all of the sounds of woods and fields among which hardly one is more full of romance than the mellow note from a hunting-horn. I remember a friend of mine who one day mistook running hounds for a horn and left his stand only to have four deer cross it. But he took the mishap good-naturedly, saying that he was as bad as the fellow walking the railroad who remarked with gentle joy, as the shrieking freight train bore thunderously down upon him, "That is the first songbird I have heard this spring!"

XX

BIRDS OF THE SOUTHERN WINTER

TO THE blizzard-bound Northerner there is no more fascinating form of imagination than to picture to himself the sunny homes that have been found by his bird friends that have migrated southward. Yet few bird-lovers can have an accurate idea of the winter surroundings of their summer favourites unless they have observed them in the South.*

It is a well-known fact that the robin changes his disposition with his location; when on the lawn he may be the most confiding and friendly companion, but at any distance from a house he is apt to develop traits of wildness and suspicion. The characteristic of wariness is always found among robins in the South. In general, the robin is songless in his winter quarters, his only notes being his liquid word of alarm and his shrill flight call. Occasionally, however, a flock will give voice to a subdued chorus, audible at a considerable distance through the hollow-echoing piney woods. These great pineries of the Southland, together with the swamps that drain—or more often do not drain—them, harbour robins in

*These observations were made near Charleston, S. C.

vast numbers. Near the mouth of the Santee River in southeastern South Carolina the writer recently tried to estimate the number of robins in a flight that was changing swamps. How wide the flight was is not known, but the portion upon which the estimate was based passed over an open field, completely surrounded by tall pines, a quarter of a mile long by a half-mile wide. Over this space the robins flew from noon until dusk—about five hours. At any fixed period there must have been a thousand robins in sight; so, estimating that it took a robin a minute and a half to fly across the field, the total number seen could not run far short of two hundred thousand. Probably the number was much greater. During this hurried passage the birds were silent except for an occasional flight call, which would be answered by a score of similar cries.

In the liberal semi-tropical woods of the South the robins have a "continual feast of nectared sweets." They feed chiefly on the black berries of the gum tree, on those of the tupelo, on the scarlet ones of the holly, the cassena, and the baybrier, and on those of that peculiar hybrid the wild orange. They are also very fond of the faintly sweet crumpled yellow berries of the Pride-of-India tree. The swamps and thickets are full of berry-laden vines, while every watercourse is lined with growths bearing succulent fruits. It is a fact not generally known that the fruit of the wild orange—a semi-domesticated evergreen, bearing small black berries, not edible, about the size of gooseberries—contains an acid that is intoxicant;

and the writer has seen robins, gorged on this rich food, become silly and dazed, and actually fall to the ground in what was apparently a drunken stupor. It has been suggested that this unfortunate state was brought about by the birds' gluttony; and while this theory may be correct, the other seems nearer right, since robins are not known to suffer ill effects from overeating other kinds of foods. One of the most beautiful sights in all the pine woods of the South is that of a flock of robins feasting in a holly tree. The bark of the tree is grayish white, and the leaves, of course, are those of a typical evergreen. The holly often attains—especially near water—a height of fifty or sixty feet, and is usually cone-shaped, like many varieties of cedar; and when its glossy foliage is starred with myriads of twinkling scarlet berries, its beauty is supreme. It looks as, perhaps, a Christmas tree would look in paradise. When the red-breasts, roaming the wide woods, come upon such a glorious find, they are as happy as little children are over the beneficence of Santa Claus. They crowd into the green foliage, their bright breasts flashing back and forth against the dark green of the leaves and the shadowy snow of the trunk and branches, or blending in glistening beauty with the colour of the berries. In the delight of such feasting a robin will occasionally resort to a shady alcove in the tree or on some retired limb near by, there to give rather droll and thoughtful utterance to some half-forgotten notes of spring song. Other robins, on near-by perches, will preen their feathers until their turn for

berries comes, when they will fly into the tree, whence will instantly emerge those that have had their share of feasting. There seems always to be much good-fellowship manifest, and there is little quarrelling except on the part of a few male birds that doubtless have begun to feel the significance of crabbed age. The belief of those who hold that a flock of robins in a berry tree is continually "scrapping" doubtless arises from the habit that the birds have of fluttering before the fruit they intend taking; and when flocks do this, and myriads flutter about a tree, calling in delight and excitement, the casual impression given is one of woodland warfare. As the winter advances, robins draw in from the pine woods and the swamps to cities, villages, and plantations, where they find winter-mellowed fruit awaiting them. In such environments the robins lose much of their wild and wary nature and become the friendly, confiding birds of the Northern spring and early summer.

Among the sweet-voiced lurkers in thickets and in coverts that Milton has called "bosky bournes" the catbird and the brown thrasher are worthy of most notice. The veery, that superb mysterious voice of the woodland, winters in South America, as does the wood-thrush, else these had glorified the winter in the Southern States, would they, indeed, deign to sing at such a season. When the first breath of autumn tinges the Southern woods, the catbirds arrive and immediately begin their foraging for poke-berries. This luscious bird fruit is commonly found along fencerows, in grown-up cleared ground, and

on the borders of thickets; and there our querulous arrival is to be seen whisking from pokeberry bush to rail fence, where he will fluff up his feathers, then smooth them—actually flatten them—and, flirting his red-tinged tail, will peer inquisitively from side to side, giving his cautious, questioning call. It may be a fancy, or it may be that this is true only of certain birds that have been observed, but the catbird in the South appears to have more red in his plumage than the same bird in the North; but he has little enough in either home. All winter long catbirds are to be found in thickety growths that afford them shelter and food. The brown thrashers, as a rule, inhabit the denser copses, where their favourite occupation seems to be scratching—literally shuffling—among the dead leaves for whatever gain such capers afford. They are more frequent singers during the winter than catbirds, though their exquisite lyrics of the dawn and the twilight are heard only with the coming of love in the springtime.

Cedar waxwings are welcome visitors to the South in the winter, for, while they are shy and silent, their manners are attractively demure and their plumage rivals in delicate tints the exquisite blending of shades usually found only on game birds. They are late nesters in the North, being, in fact, rather negligent about the performance of this essential duty; for it is often as late as August before a brood is reared. When their scattered bands wander southward, they unite; so frequently they may be observed in flocks of several hundred. The food they enjoy

most is the waxen berry of the mistletoe, though in general they eat just what robins eat, and the two species are often found associated together.

Mourning doves range from Cuba to Ontario, and nest almost throughout their range, though most of them are migrants. Their movements, however, are slow, and are regulated chiefly by the amount of grain that can be gleaned from the stubble fields. By the first of September they are well in flight, and by November the South is overrun with them. There they are to be differentiated from the little rosy-breasted ground dove—known locally as the “mourning dove”—whose note is as crooning as that of its soberer-hued relative is grieving. Doves in the South during the winter feed in open fields much as they do in the North, and roost in great numbers in pine or myrtle thickets, sheltered from the wind. In the daytime, during their resting or siesta periods they resort to cypress or willow-bordered streams, and to the murmuring spires of lofty pines, where they sun themselves and drowse in the high aromatic air. In peafields or cottonfields of any size it is no unusual thing to flush a thousand doves or more; and birds disturbed in this manner invariably fly toward the nearest dry-topped tree. This habit has well-nigh proved fatal to the species, for, by posting themselves under such trees and by sending out riders over the fields, hunters can kill incredible numbers of doves. A recent report from a branch of the Audubon Society in Alabama stated that a half-dozen hunters in a single day had killed several thousand doves in

one cottonfield by the method just described. Fortunately, the Southern States have awakened to the importance of protecting their birds, and wise laws have put a stop to such slaughter.

It was while pursuing a flock of doves in a Southern cornfield that the writer proved the excellent saying of John Burroughs, that in bird study "what no man ever saw before may at any moment be revealed."

Hampton Plantation is one of those vast old rice estates along the lower Santee River in South Carolina. It has always been remarkably rich in bird life. One eventful day in November, 1896, while in a field adjacent to the river, my attention was attracted by the sight of a dove twice the size of those in the flock; its tail was longer and more pointed, and the sheen on its neck glistened and gleamed in the soft autumn sunlight. The difference in its plumage from that of the ordinary dove was visible at a considerable distance. The bird was excessively wary, and, though it was difficult to approach, it would not fly far. It seemed tired, as if it had just completed a long migratory flight. After following it for more than an hour, I succeeded in shooting it. Upon close examination it proved to be a genuine passenger pigeon. This conclusion was confirmed by my father, who, as a boy, had seen many thousands of these beautiful birds feeding in the oak trees on the slopes of the mountains in North Carolina. This was the last wild pigeon ever taken in South Carolina, and one of the last observed in America.

Arthur Wayne, the well-known Southern ornithologist, the author of "The Birds of South Carolina," saw a pair of wild pigeons in Greenville County of that state in 1886; but, expert as he is in observation, and tireless as he is in pursuit, he has since that time seen no member of this splendid species. And that excellent bird-lover Frank M. Chapman reports that in eighteen years of field work he has seen but two specimens of the passenger pigeon.

Among the bird sights that have the power to impress through sheer wonder and astonishment none is greater or more beautiful than a vast concourse of red-winged blackbirds, either covering long aisles of cypresses as with a sable mantle or "balling" in inky clouds over the rice stubble. It is estimated that in such flocks the number runs close on half a million. Sometimes they light in some favourite feeding-place—as where a stack of rice has stood—in such countless numbers that they actually swarm on one another's backs, seeming to be two or three tiers deep. The record shot for such a target is one hundred and sixty-eight birds with two barrels. Blackbirds in the winter resort to the river marshes and the waste thickets of delta lands both to feed and to roost. In company with the redwings there are often boat-tailed grackles, Florida grackles, and rusty blackbirds. Occasionally, too, there will be seen an albino of one of these species, and a most odd and surprising sight it is.

Blackbirds are very destructive to rice, both while it is in the field and after it has been stacked. The

tops of the stacks are soon shredded of their grain; but birds forage along the sides all winter. Some kinds of birds, particularly blackbirds and several varieties of the sparrow family, beleaguer the rice all day; but it is at dawn or at twilight that the stacks are gathering-places for all the birds on the plantation. There flames the cardinal, his haughty crest rising and falling with every change in his subtle and various emotions; there the blue jay, ceasing his endless pranks and his noisy clamouring in the live-oaks, will sail out of the top of a tall tree to find his supper at a common table among humbler companions; sometimes the tufted titmouse will feed on rice, as also will flickers; most remarkable of all, perhaps, is the appearance of a hermit thrush among the motley concourse of birds.

In general, the birds of the Southern winter are not singers; and the absence of the lyric strain is a serious defect in a character whose chief charm, as in the case of song birds, is romantic. But probably we should not love their songs half so well if we could hear them all the time. During the winter months even the glorious mocking-bird is a harsh-mannered, harsh-voiced neighbour, though a balmy, bright hour is apt to melt his heart and to lure him into song. Probably the cheeriest, bonniest, of all the winter birds is the intrepid, the dauntless, the deliciously pert and inquisitive Carolina wren, whose carol rings merrily from the faded garden or from the wind-swept woodpile. During all the months of bare trees and north winds he is singing jauntily, investi-

gating outhouses and cellars, always with his busy air of absurd importance.

No migrant changes its nature so completely during different periods of the year as does the bobolink. In the North, where this sportive songster is found in grassy meadows and along reed-grown streams in the summer, he is the personification of blithe joy and abandon. Bryant's poem to him is an excellently accurate description of his summer nature; but during his stay in the South he is an entirely different creature. While he is not really a resident of the Southern States during the winter—he winters as far south as Paraguay and southern Brazil—his stay at the end of the summer is often six weeks in length—ample time in which to study a bird in a “stop-over” environment. In the ricefields of the South he is a most interesting as well as a most destructive bird, and his presence adds to the picturesqueness of the great rice harvest. The bobolinks arrive about August 20th, and sometimes linger, if there is good feeding in grassy cornfields, until the first of October. When the birds first come, they are rather thin and shy, and their only note is a metallic monotonous “pinkpank.” But as the season progresses they become very fat and very tame, often sitting on the coffee-grass that lines the margins of the ricefield banks until the observer can almost catch them. The plumage of both sexes at the time is softly ochreous, with tints of brown and black on the back and wings.

To the rice-planter these “rice-birds” are a veritable plague, so much so that one of the regular

expenses of the plantation is that occasioned by "bird-minding." There are various ways in which to combat these pests. One is by posting Negroes on platforms along the banks, from which eminences they bawl their long, hand-woven "wahwoo" lashes. The crack of these whips sounds like the report of a gun, and early in the season is rather effective in keeping the birds restless. But after a while they become used to the harmless din, and more strenuous methods have to be resorted to. On a heavy charge of coarse-grained powder a flattened buckshot is rammed tightly. When this shot leaves a musket, it sings above the feeding birds, and its sound is said to resemble the rush of the wings of a sharp-shinned hawk, a dread enemy of rice-birds. At any rate, it has a wonderful effect in making the feeding hosts rise and scatter far. But the only way to keep birds from ruining a crop is to send Negro bird-hunters into the rice after them. The fields at this stage of growth are flooded, and the water is about two feet deep. It is stagnant, muddy, and infested with all manner of water-loving insects and reptiles. Yet the Negro hunter, slouching his battered cap over his eyes, will sink out of sight under the golden canopy of the rice, appearing next far out in the field, enveloped in smoke and shadowed by myriads of birds that he has roused from their banquet. In order to make a telling shot, the gunner is obliged to keep below the level of the rice; and the distance of the stalk is sometimes half a mile. Through tangled growths of saw-grass, over blind ditches and bog-

holes, always up to his knees in water and always under the rice, the bird-minder creeps warily. Nor is his anxiety confined to a fear that he may flush the birds out of range; for in the water through which he crawls there lurk the deadly cotton-mouth moccasin, the water-rattler, and even the alligator—though an alligator seldom attacks man unless he mistakes him for some defenseless and legitimate object of prey. When the Negro comes upon the birds, he makes sure of their exact location—which is not an easy matter because of the bewildering sound made by the chirring of thousands of bills on the rough rice hulls—levels his musket over the drooping heads of the grain, and utters a long, rolling whoop. As the feasters clear the level his musket roars out; and, if conditions be favourable, the gunner frequently picks up more than a hundred birds. Other hunters prefer to go into the field and wait until a great cloud of birds, disturbed, yet seeking a place to light, “balls” near enough to shoot.

But while the chief interest occasioned by this late summer visitor is rather expensive and rather unpleasant, there are at such a time observations possible which to the student of bird life are highly valuable. Undoubtedly the most impressive of these is the fact of the rice-bird's gluttony. He grows so corpulent that he grows unwary, he loses his grace of flight, his voice changes from a tenor to a lugubrious bass, and he is actually so fat that if, when shot, he falls on a hard ricefield bank, he will literally burst open. Rice-birds roost in the marshes

that border the rivers and in tall reeds that have taken possession of waste ricelands. Even there they are pursued by hunters, who, blinding them with a lightwood torch, pick them off their perches. And, even though the birds are a nuisance to the South, for the sake of others who love them for their songs of the summer, laws should be passed forbidding the capture of birds at night.

The bobolinks pay the South another visit in the spring, when they are known as May-birds. At that time they feed on the rice that is being sown. The males are then in full summer plumage and in full song. They precede the females in migration by a week or more, and appear far more joyous than their soberer-hued helpmates. This spring visit to the South is very short, and the true bobolink as he is at this time is not so well known there as the rice-bird is in the late summer.

A drive through the Southern woods in winter is a source of great delight to the bird lover. The level roads, smooth as white sand can make them and fragrantly carpeted with pine-needles, lead from dewy swamp to airy ridges, and by tiny farms of Negroes and poor whites—farms that have been desperately wrested from the engulfing growth of the monstrous woods. In the native growths of pine and tupelo the birds most frequently met, and seldom found anywhere else, are the pine-warbler, the brown-headed nuthatch, and the downy woodpecker. Occasionally, swinging far through the tinted vistas of the purple forest, there will be seen the magnificent

black pileated woodpecker, which, with his flaming scarlet cockade, looks at a distance much as the lost ivory-billed woodpecker must have looked before the encroachments of men drove him out of his native haunts. From the grassy roadside flickers bound up startlingly, hurtle to near-by trees, and there hang, their heads peering over their shoulders. On passing through gallberry thickets or along water-courses with heavy undergrowth, jolly towhees, with their striking red and black plumage, will rustle in the dead leaves or startle one by their abrupt "fluff-fluff" rise out of the brush. Perched on a dry twig, they will eye the intruder amiably, though they sometimes seem to express a personal opinion in their baffling incredulous whistle. Or, again, from the depths of some shadowy thicket their clear call, comparable in resonance to that of the bobwhite, will sound far through the woods, "Towhee! Towhee!" In sunny spaces along the road small flocks of doves will be seen, and frequently brown coveys of quail will troop gracefully over the sandy driveway or will huddle together until one passes. Through the sunlit woods large flocks of bluebirds can be seen, warbling that delightful note that in the North heralds the spring. Meadow larks, while usually found in grainfields and cottonfields, are often met with in the pine woods, where they find excellent cover in the tall yellow broom-sedge. Travelling together in small flocks, the Carolina chickadee and the tufted titmouse are frequently seen, as are also goldfinches, brown creepers, ruby-crowned kinglets, and blue-gray

gnat-catchers. If the observer be fortunate, it is quite likely that he may catch a glimpse of a blue-headed or a white-eyed vireo, an orange-crowned, a yellow-throated, or a palm warbler, or even a Southern yellowthroat or a golden-crowned thrush. Most of the members of the sparrow family winter in fields rather than in woods; and so, if the road leads through cultivated lands, one may see vesper sparrows, savanna sparrows—along ditch banks—chipping sparrows, white-throated sparrows, and, most welcome of all, song sparrows, that sing throughout the entire winter.

XXI

THE PRINCE OF THE WOODLAND

TWO of us were sitting on an old mossy rail fence that sagged its way through the deep woods of western North Carolina. We were smoking and our guns lay across our knees. Suddenly, with no warning at all, a cock grouse whirred out of the laurels directly behind us, and went flashing away down the hillside. My friend, who was sitting on the right, turned on the fence, threw his gun to the left shoulder, and, at seventy yards, far through the glimmering vista of forest light and shade, brought the proud cock's flight to a headlong collapse.

"Man alive! How did you ever do it?" I gasped.

But he could not answer; for he was the more surprised of the two of us; nor has he yet quite recovered from the astonishing shock of pleasure that he experienced. And that was seven years ago.

That story is but one of the thousands that could be told to illustrate the tricks of the prince of the woodland; for in this respect he is probably superior to all game birds. So many members of the great game family rely for their safety on keeping their distance from man; or, when surprised, on a flight

which carries them far out of danger. The bobwhite quail depends to such a degree on his protective colouring that he may sometimes be picked up in the grass, out of a clump of bushes, or from among piles of autumn-strewn leaves. But the ruffed grouse does not greatly rely on his colouring; perhaps he is conscious of his size, which more readily betrays his presence. Nor does he wholly depend on his flight, which is indeed worthy of his—and man's—deepest respect. Rather he relies on a certain resourcefulness, an ability to use his wits, a positive genius for making the manner of his escape suitable to the nature of the circumstances and the form of the danger which confront him.

Aside from beauty of plumage and a princely bearing, another point on which the ruffed grouse takes the palm from every other game bird in North America is his sheer pluck. This is not said inadvisedly; for after calling thirty-pound wild gobblers in the pinelands of the South, after shooting mallards and black ducks over decoys on the East Coast, after bagging the sporty bobwhite quail in the covers of several states—in fact, after a long and not unprofitable experience, I am fully convinced that a brace of fine grouse in the sportsman's jacket, after a day in laurelled gorges and along the borders of autumn-tinted, second-growth woodlands, is more genuine game than all the other game that can be bagged. He alone by his superb gameness justifies the use of the word "game" as applying to all the birds of his class.

But it is not only of the ruffed grouse as it is brought home in the game bag that I would speak; nor yet of it essentially as an object of sport, but rather as the extraordinary romantic and picturesque figure of the woodland that it is; for the ruffed grouse is first a distinct individual and then an object of sport.

The nature of this bird is so above reproach that it must be classed among the royalty of the community of wild life: its haunts, its habits, its unfailing high spirit, its great speed on the wing, and the marvellous skill with which it executes its aerial manœuvres, its beauty of plumage and rare distinction of carriage, but above all the keenly bred woodland intelligence that invariably accompanies it—all its characteristics are admirable, except, indeed, to those poor sportsmen who find in its tricks and in the baffling nature and velocity of its flight a cause for grievance.

The grouse is as peculiarly a bird of the woods as the bobwhite is a bird of the open. Yet grouse take not unkindly to certain aspects of civilization. Thus, they are frequently to be found in old hill-side fields, overgrown with pines and cedars; in mountain orchards, and in those desolate tracts of scrub-growth that mark the trail of the lumberman. But the very nature of the grouse demands a certain wildness in its surroundings; and where all such essential elements are lacking, the birds will not be found. The grouse loves laurelled stream-wet gorges, sunny tracts of second-growth chestnuts and oaks,

glades of maple, birch and ash, and pine-grown old fields adjacent to the hills or mountains, where the sumac flames, where there are dogwood berries to be had, and where clusters of wild grapes have been sweetened by the early frost. In general, despite the fondness of the grouse for taking refuge from pursuit in hemlocks, pines, and other evergreens, it much prefers woodlands that are grown with deciduous trees. But the summer range of the grouse naturally differs from the autumn and winter range. In summer it is to be found over a wider territory and at higher altitudes. And since at this season its food is animal rather than vegetable, it will be found oftenest on the ground, searching for crickets, beetles, and the larval forms of woodland butterflies.

As soon as the autumn sets in, the princely bird delights to resort to sunny southern exposures and is frequently to be seen along the bases of the hills and mountains, among scrub-pines and cedars, and along mountain streams entering the valley. In the late autumn, when all the leaves are down, he is fond of resorting to gullies and to those dry beds of summer streams which descend the hills; there he can generally procure an abundant supply of wild grapes and green-briar berries. In the fall, Sir Ruffneck—do not confuse the term with another which never could apply to him—begins to be a vegetarian; and then, at feeding time in the early morning or late evening, he is most likely to be found in some dogwood tree, under some grapevine, beneath fruitful oaks or chestnuts, or along some old woodland fence, where the

clusters of scarlet sumac flame and the heavy green-briars offer beneath their shelter bunches of succulent berries.

In the winter, the grouse is transformed from a terrestrial to an arboreal bird; for, when the snow covers the ground together with all the varieties of food which it might offer, the grouse becomes dependent on such berries as may remain clinging to bare vines, and on the buds which the trees seem to put out for his especial benefit. Thus, in the winter, or at least while snow is on the ground, our grouse is a bird of the trees; though he often leaves his tracks in the snow and occasionally will spend a bitter night buried snugly beneath it.

For ordinary roosting, the grouse usually chooses a low, bushy-topped evergreen and perches on the matted foliage rather than on a limb. Often, he is not above reach of a fox, and always roosts within easy climb of a weasel; and this habit of his is surely one reason why his tribe does not increase more rapidly in those regions where he is afforded adequate protection from hunters.

Except in flight, or when walking, unconscious of the presence of the observer, the ruffed grouse is not frequently seen; its protective colouring is as perfect as the bobwhite's. Occasionally it can be detected on a log, or in some tree in which the foliage is not dense. When on the alert in a tree it presents an extraordinarily perfect picture of wariness and wildness. On the limb of a spruce or pine the little prince will stand erect, stiff, and motionless, his feathers held so

compactly against his body as to give him a slim appearance. If dogs are working about under a tree, the grouse will crane his shapely neck and peer at their manœuvres. There is small doubt that he considers them foxes; and, knowing that they cannot climb, he will stay where he is and watch them with curious interest. At such a time, it is sometimes possible to approach within photographing distance of a ruffed grouse. Some poor sportsmen take advantage of such a situation to shoot the glorious bird, and some of them would be surprised to learn that they ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Nothing gives a better idea of the skill in flight and the game qualities of the ruffed grouse than the fact that it has held its own against almost incalculable odds. It probably has more enemies than any other game bird; and among these are the subtlest and most intelligent of the stalkers. Aside from its wild enemies, it must face the hunter, by whom it is followed relentlessly into the deepest fastnesses. Poor marksmanship matched against its skill and speed in flight explains one fruitful cause of the survival of the grouse. Among its chief enemies in nature are the fox, the skunk, the wildcat, the weasel, the mink, the bald eagle, the golden eagle, the Cooper's hawk, the pigeon hawk, the duck hawk (peregrine falcon), the red-shouldered hawk, the barred owl, and the great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*). Even the raccoon will sometimes succeed in taking the grouse at night. And the subtle mink must also be ranked as a destroyer; for, while not frequently

ranging in the territory of the grouse, he will never pass one by.

In the Big Alleghany Mountains of western Pennsylvania I have been told by old grouse-hunters that foxes destroy great numbers of the birds, especially the half-grown ones and the grown ones of the first year. One reliable hunter told me that, in following the track of a weasel over soft snow, he had come upon the carcasses of seven ruffed grouse, each lying under a little evergreen tree. In each case, the night prowler had sucked the blood, eaten shreds of flesh from the wound in the neck, and had then abandoned the bird. In two or three instances there was tell-tale evidence on the snow of the bitter struggle that had taken place; but in the baffling darkness and attacked by surprise, the woodland prince could not but succumb to one of the stealthiest and, for its size, one of the strongest of animals. Of course, the owls and foxes are night hunters, and they take heavy toll of the ranks of this splendid bird. In fact, in some regions the ruffed grouse constitutes one of the chief factors in Reynard's regular diet.

The calls of the ruffed grouse are peculiar in sound and they are singularly few in number. It may with justice be said to be one of the silentest of birds. The drumming of the cock, which is a call answering several purposes, is, of course, made with the wings. It has an almost weirdly vague yet penetrating, throbbing quality. Like the crowing of a game-cock, it is sometimes a challenge, or at least a proud expression of an assurance of general supremacy.

Again, it attracts the female in the rapturous mating season; but it is not essentially a mating signal, a love note; for it may be heard at all seasons. It is most frequently heard in the spring and in the fall.

This is one of the sounds of nature to be marked and remembered. To locate the direction from which it comes is difficult; and to judge its distance away requires woodcraft of a high degree. It is probably more baffling in these two respects than the ventriloquistic note of a great horned owl, or the whistling of the wings of wild ducks, passing invisibly after nightfall. Drumming is the only sound made by the ruffed grouse that can be imitated. Therefore, this bird, mercifully, can seldom be called to a blind.

When suddenly alarmed, it gives a little clucking sound, pitched in the same tone as that given by the startled bobwhite quail. Also, when the young have become scattered, the mother calls them up with a series of short, sharp, insistent, clucking whistles. Occasionally, the grouse will give a querulous call while in flight. But none of these notes is often heard. On the wing, but for the whirr of the heavy primaries, the ruffed grouse is generally silent; and in sailing or volplaning at amazing angles, his wings may make no more sound than a bat's. A big grouse can fly low over a hunter's head without making enough noise to attract his attention. But on the other hand, I have heard an old cock, dropping with incredible velocity from the top of a high ridge to a far, hemlock-darkened gorge below, go literally roaring down the mountainside, the wind shrilling through the hol-

low arch of his wings as it does through the bald eagle's when he drops like a bolt on his prey.

When wounded, this bird makes no sound of protest; though when one that is winged is pursued through bushes and over logs, it is likely to cluck excitedly. I have always considered this silence as in a degree indicative of his princely blood, though it is a distinguishing characteristic among all truly game birds. The greatest complainers are the harriers of these birds, and in particular the duck hawk, which screams shrilly when wounded.

Other variations in plumage are sometimes observed. I secured a large cock grouse in November, 1913, which displayed a heavy chocolate-coloured ruff, quite unlike the typical black ruff. Some will be bagged which are exceptionally dark, others unusually red. Those found in the North are "booted," as a provision against intense cold, while the "pheasants"—same species—killed in the mountains of the South have clean legs. As to size, there is not much variation throughout the wide range inhabited.

The flight of the ruffed grouse is essentially a flight of the woods, as opposed to the bobwhite's, which is generally a flight of the open; and though I do not disparage the flight of the quail or deny his ample ability to take care of himself in the forest as well as in the field, his flight is far less impressive than that of the grouse. The latter's is all ease, grace, buoyancy, and amazing speed. It seems to gather force and choose direction without pause or effort. And all the while he never forgets to put the biggest tree

or the only evergreen in the neighbourhood between his vanishing form and the eager sportsman's levelled piece. The prominence of such a baffling obstruction is seldom noticed by the hunter until the wily bird has effaced himself behind it. The distinguishing characteristic of the grouse's flight is its infinite variety; for, as no two places in the woods are ever exactly the same, and as the bird's manner of flight must, at least to some extent, be made to conform to the nature of its surroundings, he is obliged to use resourcefulness in effecting his escape. And this he has developed to an admirable degree.

The only game bird whose flight is truly comparable to that of the ruffed grouse is the woodcock; but the latter's flight, while often swift and enigmatic, frequently offers the sportsman a dead easy shot. The woodcock seldom purposely screens himself behind trees, and his getaway, while baffling in dense thickets, is quite easy and tame in the open. Moreover, the woodcock in flight generally seems to be looking for a suitable place to alight, while the ruffed grouse, once started, apparently has not the slightest idea of stopping anywhere this side of day after to-morrow. Whether it be reality or not, the end of his flight seems to be a sudden check, a dive as it were into a fallen treetop or beside an old log, or a quick gliding upward to the shelter of an evergreen. In short, when he decides to take to cover, he does it like a man taking shelter from a hard shower or from flying bullets.

Yet this splendid bird soon learns when it is among

friends and protectors. There are authentic instances of wild grouse that would come from the woods at a call, would eat from the hand, and would allow themselves to be picked up without displaying any fear or suspicion.

From these and similar instances it may be inferred that, in spite of the latent wildness of its nature and of its love for conditions incompatible with those of civilization, the ruffed grouse can be domesticated; at least, it can be tamed and reared successfully. But so far experiments with it have been desultory; though the time is coming when, if the bird is to be preserved in its present range, it will have to be bred and distributed as quail are now. Of the two birds, the grouse is the more hardy, and is never winterkilled. Their nests run apparently equal risks of destruction; wild animals and forest fires accounting for the loss of the partridge's, and the crow and the mowing machine for the bobwhite's.

Every sportsman who has hunted the ruffed grouse has his story to tell of the best shot he ever made or saw or heard of. There is a singular and suspicious dearth of stories recording the worst misses, though, conscience knows, there is an abundance of authentic material.

Once, while going through a thicket of pines and cedars, I walked under a wild dogwood tree which was bare of leaves. I had passed it and was in the act of stooping under the low-sweeping boughs of a pine when a ruffed grouse, which had been sitting down on the limbs of the dogwood, whirred out and

darted away behind the dense cedars. From where he was sitting, I could have reached him from the ground; and he was directly over me as I passed. Why did he not fly out at my approach, as every other wild bird would have done? Why did he deliberately sit in that bare tree, waiting until I was stooping under a pine? In plain terms, he had too much sense to fly out in front of me. He saw his deadly peril; he weighed his chances carefully, deliberately. He waited for the favourable moment, until he had me at his mercy. Then he dashed away safely to liberty. That is one reason why, in shooting grouse, I never feel that I am taking advantage of this extraordinary bird; for, measured by the times he has taken cruel advantage of me, and of my race of sportsmen, I am one of his very heaviest creditors. Nor can I reasonably hope that our score will ever be settled.

The grouse, then, is a bird of wonderful resources; there is no counting on exactly what he will do. He acts from intelligent motives relative to his interest; and without more than instinct, no bird could do the audacious things he does and "get away with them." But, as has been hinted before, *Nonasa umbellus* is a prince, a creature of divine rights and powers, a super-bird. And he is far more the master of the situation than the sportsman who pursues him.

His presence never fails to impart a romantic wildness to the woods which he inhabits. The charm of his beauty never wanes, and the sportsman's appreciation of him as an object of his pursuit is con-

stantly increasing. As the bonny quail expresses admirably the spirit of brown stubble-fields and frost-withered fencerows, so the prince of the woodland embodies the haunting charm of whatever is wildest, most beautiful, and most elusive in the forest.

XXII

WAYS OF THE WILD TURKEY

DAY is breaking over the lonely tract of virgin timber; and the old wild gobbler that has spent the night in the giant pine, a hundred feet above the ground, awakens, lifts his head that has been crooked beneath his wing, shifts his cramped body awkwardly on his lofty perch, ruffles his mist-damp feathers, and cranes his neck for a sight of a suitable place on which to come to ground. Soon he launches himself from the limb, making little noise as he sails down at a gradual slope. On the ground, amid dew-dripping bushes and drenched grasses, his foraging immediately and assiduously begins. If he has roosted at some distance from his regular feeding grounds, he will move toward them; but, taking a variety of food and finding it widely distributed, his progress through the early morning woodland is lordly in its deliberateness.

This food varies greatly with the season, and with the foods to be found in any locality. If the season be summer, the wild turkey will eat leaves and grasses of the tenderer sort, ripe berries and insects of almost every kind. Crops of summer-killed wild turkeys that have been examined for the purpose of

discovering the nature of the food consumed have been found to contain the following assortment: Grasshoppers (many in kind, and in large numbers), moths, crickets, cotton-worms, tobacco-worms, leaf-hoppers, leaf-eating beetles, lizards, tadpoles, thousand-legs, centipedes, ichneumon flies, katydids, yellowjackets, hornets, caterpillars, dragonflies, and a host of smaller insect forms. A few small frogs, toads, and snakes helped to make the turkeys' diet like the ingredients of a witch's cauldron. But, varied as are the kinds of animal life that help to sustain these great American game birds, it is chiefly from the vegetable world that they obtain food. A careful estimate would place the relative proportion of animal to vegetable food at 20 per cent. to 80 per cent. Wild turkeys are very fond of all kinds of grain; and in sparsely settled districts they frequently emerge, after harvest, from their forest fastnesses to glean in fields of corn, barley, wheat, rice, rye, and buckwheat. In certain localities they have acquired a decided taste for indigenous foods; for example, in the South, wild turkeys feed extensively on live-oak acorns; in Virginia, they visit peanut fields; while in the Southwest they devour great quantities of pinon nuts and juniper berries. Besides the vegetable foods already mentioned, wild turkeys eat the succulent tops and buds of many shrubs and grasses—known usually as "browsin'"; and in addition, wild black cherries, grapes, haw berries, berries of the wild flowering dogwood, tea-berries, sour gum-berries, acorns from all the oaks,

seeds of jewel weed and tick trefoil, chestnuts, pine-mast, spicebush berries, chinquapins, pecans, persimmons, the fruit of the prickly pear, the berries of the false Solomon's seal, the berries of the Southern tupelo and the wax myrtle, the seeds of many grasses, and all leguminous seeds. I have watched wild turkeys in the late autumn skilfully stripping the long heads of crabgrass. While the smaller game birds such as the bobwhite and the valley quail eat the seeds of weeds and grasses delicately, wild turkeys are almost equal to ducks in their vacuum-cleaning powers of food accumulation.

Until the forenoon has almost passed, wild turkeys will roam the woods and the swamps, feeding. Then they will repair to a sunny, sandy, sheltered place, where they can dust themselves and drowse. This is a daily habit, and a very wholesome one; and it is substantially shared by all the more intelligent forms of wild life. A flock of turkeys will often use the same place for a siesta through long periods of time. While this part of their routine holds for both winter and summer, during the warm months the resting time of day is usually spent in the shade, and near water.

Allowing themselves three hours for their drowsing, the flock will then begin the evening foraging; and this meal is taken on the way to roost. If undisturbed, turkeys will roost in the same locality for months at a time. They are particularly fond of virgin timber; indeed, only rarely will a wild turkey roost in any but an old tree. Hunters know "roost

trees"; year after year these noble birds repair to the same trees for roosting. Evergreens of great size are often chosen, such a tree being the favourite; but large cypresses draped with Spanish moss, tupelos, huge old chestnuts, monumental oaks are also selected. Before going to roost, turkeys do much stretching; they eye critically many trees, the daylight usually fading before they take swift little runs, rise on powerful wings, and swiftly and gracefully mount to their high perches. Their ascent at evening, like their descent in the morning, is almost noiseless. On a still evening, at a distance of a hundred yards, one can hear a soft "swish-swish-swish," or a piece of bark may fall. A hen may call querulously. But there will be no further sounds to tell that the birds have gone to roost. When roosting in bare trees against a clear sky, it is of course very easy to see them; but to see a roosted turkey in an evergreen or in a moss-shrouded tree tests the eye of the most skilful woodsman.

Such are some of the commoner habits of these great birds when unmolested; but as danger is a constant element in their lives, their behaviour should be viewed in its presence. Wild intelligence—and perhaps human as well—may be judged in some degree by the possessor's manner of escaping danger. As an eluder of trouble, the wild turkey is a champion. If he were not, long since he would have become extinct on the North American continent. This bird has had a thorough training in wariness; and he has proved himself an admirable pupil. Few things

in nature are swifter than the movements of a wild turkey's keen blue head; and those movements are an index of his character. The turkey has, I think, more wariness in his nature than have other wild creatures of equal intelligence; more than the deer, the bear, or the fox. And if once his suspicion is aroused, nothing can allay it. In hunting the wild turkey, sportsmen know that if the bird becomes aware of trouble in his vicinity he will leave "on high gear" for other and distant parts. A deer or a fox under similar circumstances may be seen again; but it is not so with a turkey. "When he goes," an old woodsman once said to me, "he cleans up; and he isn't coming home till the week after you're gone."

If the bird is a heavy one, he is usually loth to take wing, preferring running as a method of escape. There is an advantage in this mode of flight, for it does not betray the fugitive by a sudden vivid disclosure; moreover, he is able to keep to cover, and to pursue an irregular, dodging course. But when the wild turkey once takes wing, his flight is always impressive; and when momentum is fairly attained, his speed is remarkable. In startled flight, this speed is at least sixty miles an hour, and can be increased to a hundred miles, especially if the bird is sailing down a long mountain slope.

There are several distinct phases of a wild turkey's flight. The little running start is nearly always a part of it; provided, of course, that the flight is made from the ground. The rise is heavy but vigorous, and the big bird gathers momentum very

rapidly. In manœuvring for height, it shows extreme skill in turning from objects in its line of flight. When once fairly off the ground, the flight of the wild turkey may have what the ballistic experts call a "flat trajectory." I have seen birds in level woods fly three-quarters of a mile in the same horizontal plane.

At the beginning of his flight, and especially if danger crowds him, the turkey may rise to a considerable height at a sharp angle; then, giving his mighty wings a sudden downward curve, he may make the whole remainder of his flight a gradual sailing to earth. I have more than once flushed old birds that did this. In each case, before covering a hundred yards of horizontal distance, the bird would be eighty or ninety feet up, almost to the tops of giant short-leaf pines. Then he would suddenly check his rise and set his great wings to sail. I watched each of these birds as far as I could, and I am sure that not one came to earth short of three hundred yards; yet in that distance he did not once beat his wings. On one occasion I rode up a splendid gobbler which, much to my delight, took a course in the sky that promised to bring him over a fellow sportsman of mine, standing in the woods two hundred yards away. But at the pinnacle of his rise the turkey suddenly sensed danger ahead, whereupon he adroitly changed his course sharply at right angles, and went sailing grandly away to safety. The end of the flight is accomplished by volplaning, by sailing at a moderate angle to the ground. The flight

may end in a tree; if so, the turkey commonly chooses one with a thick crest, on the very top of which he alights, so as to remain invisible from the ground. If he alights thus, he can be approached; but if he alights on a limb, and in sight, there is small chance of coming within several hundred feet of him. I have circled beneath a big yellow pine for twenty minutes trying to locate a big gobbler somewhere in the high-tufted crest, and have failed to see him until he chose to show himself by taking wing again.

Wild turkeys can fly great distances, I will not say how far, for that must remain a disputed point; yet I am persuaded that these birds can keep the air for a long time. On being asked how far a white-tail deer could jump, an old woodsman said: "He can jump as far and as high as he has to." And I believe that wild turkeys can fly as far as they need to fly. I have many times known them to fly distances greater than a mile, and from the strength of their flight at its close they surely are capable of negotiating much greater distances. This is the more readily believable when we remember that the wild turkey, with speed up, seldom goes slower than a mile in a minute and a half; and that therefore his effort, though strenuous, is not prolonged.

However, the wings of a wild turkey are not to him what wings are to ordinary birds. They are emergency devices. It is, indeed, rather remarkable that they should remain so strong when we consider that they are, relatively, little used. To fly to and from the roost, to escape a sudden menace, to cross



Courtesy of "Field and Stream"
Year after year wild turkeys repair to the same trees for roosting.

stretches of water, and to sail to a calling mate—these are the uses to which they are put. But in a whole lifetime a wild turkey will not use his wings to the degree to which a mallard duck, passing in migration from Saskatchewan to the Gulf Coast, uses his pinions in a single flight. It is well for the noble bird we are considering that he has retained so well the use of his wings; for they supply him with one notable method of escape, of which he has several. Which method he employs as a danger approaches depends on his judgment in the matter; the wild turkey, particularly an old gobbler, can be counted upon to act with quick decision and that peculiar shrewdness of discretion that is characteristic of intelligent wild life.

Wild creatures of low or of moderate intelligence, which are still controlled by what the philosophers call "the herd instinct," can generally be expected to act in a certain well-defined way. Given a set of conditions, a woodsman can tell what a rabbit or a squirrel will do under such circumstances; and this methodical behaviour is a sign of a lack of resourcefulness. But as intelligence increases, so the likelihood of animals following customs diminishes. The wild turkey, being singularly endowed mentally, can seldom be depended upon to behave in a predetermined manner. He will not act in the same manner every time under identical circumstances. True, the result of his actions will usually be the same; that is, he will escape the danger; but his methods of escape are engagingly diverse. During the winter just

passed I was much interested in seeing a good illustration of this power of resourcefulness, which is also a strong proof of the bird's wariness.

The time was midday, and the place was a virgin pine forest near the South Carolina coast. I was hoping to jump a deer in the tall yellow broom-sedge through which my horse was breasting his way. Suddenly, from a gnarled old pine ahead of me, a fine gobbler sailed off, his flight taking him into a dense fastness of sweet bays and tree-myrtles. I guessed that the turkey had taken the tree while I had been still a great way off. This had been done to reconnoitre the situation and to determine what degree of danger it held. Before I had ridden within gunshot, he had decided what was best for him to do, and very promptly he had acted upon his decision. After he left me I rode on, taking the precaution of changing a buckshot for a turkey-shot shell in one barrel. While doing this—of course it was while I was thus engaged!—the very largest and heaviest gobbler that has ever come within my sight began a tremendous scuffling in the gallberry bushes beneath my horse's very nose. His great weight handicapped him, and his rise out of the bushes and broom-sedge was slow and awkward. My mount, being unused to bombs of this formidable size exploding beneath his face, stood straight up on his hind legs, pirouetted about, as the dancing dogs of the mediæval mountebanks used to do, and threw me entirely out of equilibrium. By the time order was restored, my gobbler was too far away for a shot, beating his

way off powerfully among the glimmering pines. It was only a moment later that the dog I had with me struck the scent of a third turkey and followed it on a dead run. As far as I could see, this last bird never took wing; it simply ran and dodged its way to freedom. Here, then, were three wild turkeys which, in the space of a few minutes, did three entirely different things, and effected three very skilful escapes. I do not think that the bird which let me ride up to him acted with the best intelligence; for if my horse had behaved, the day might have gone against him. However, whatever view I may take of his mental capacity, it is certain that he accomplished his object while I did not.

I have said much of the wariness of this magnificent bird; and it is true that his alertness is manifest in almost every movement and is revealed in every habit. Yet there are times when the wild turkey can be approached quite readily. It is not afraid of automobiles—of even the noisiest variety—or of riding-horses or vehicles. I have repeatedly, when in a car or in a buggy, come within twenty steps of whole flocks of turkeys, which appeared no wilder than a common farm brood. But let a man once detach his fell shape from the vehicle in which he rides, and the turkeys will at once recognize their ancient and inveterate enemy. Occasionally, a wild turkey will display something like stupidity. It seems almost impossible for one to become accustomed to the nature of a woven-wire fence; and wild turkeys have been known actually to be caught by hand while

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they were vainly and with absorbed struggles trying to force their way through such an obstacle. When setting, the female can readily be approached; indeed, it is not a difficult matter for a man to catch a wild turkey hen on her nest while she is incubating, especially if the eggs are near hatching.

The mating and nesting habits of this great bird are naturally of peculiar interest. In all regions where turkeys are found, "gobbling" begins with the earliest hints of spring. This continues for at least a month, during which there may be no actual mating of the birds. This gobbling is the challenging call of the old males; and in turkey country it may be heard chiefly in the early morning and in the late evening. It is a curiously protracted performance; sometimes a single individual will gobble for hours. It is occasioned, of course, by the awakening of the creative instinct with the dawning of the new year, when the physical being of the bird undergoes decided changes. The plumage takes on a new sheen. The nervous centres of the body are vitally stimulated. The gobbler's lores and his head and throat become a fiery red. He seems at such a season to do nothing but gobble and strut—unless it be to fight every other male that dares to come within his domain. The gobbling seldom starts instinctively! I mean that it seems like an irritated rebuke of some noise. The scream of a hawk, the lowing of a cow, the fall of a dead limb—any one of these will provoke a challenge from a male. In regions where turkeys are much hunted, a gobbler will not answer any

sound such as a whistle or the crack of a whip; but in very wild swamps such noises are replied to. During this season mentioned, an old male will seldom leave the roost without having duly bidden defiance to the world at large and to his own kind in particular. I regret that in some states hunters are permitted to shoot turkeys in the late months of winter, when it is an easy matter to lure these splendid creatures within gunshot. A hunter will usually imitate the soft and plaintive call of the female; but, strange as it may seem, far more effective is the voluble and entirely masculine challenge of the male. So straight will be the line that one gobbler will run to another that a surveyor might well envy its accuracy. But in this, as in all similar instances, there is something peculiarly reprehensible in thus taking advantage of the sex nature of noble wild life.

During the period of gobbling, while the males are literally working themselves into a pitch of fury over the matter of rivals, the females are shy and retiring. But the flocks of winter are now broken up, and the Voice of Eden is sounding to them. As the time for mating approaches, the females begin to answer the males. Their calls are faint and alluring; yet the sound carries far through wildwoods.

The nest is commonly made beside an old log, with wild briers or bushes overhanging it. Unless the first nest is destroyed, but one brood is raised; this rule holds for almost all birds, from the lowest to the highest orders. The average number of eggs

laid by a wild turkey hen is twelve, though clutches of eighteen and twenty eggs are occasionally found. During the incubation period, the hen leaves her nest twice a day—in the early morning and in the late evening. At such times she is comparatively tame, appearing to think more of keeping her nest secret than of her own safety. My impressions of wild hens abroad at such times have always been the same: the birds are plaintively tame. They appear to take the attitude that they should really be spared observation while their domestic duties are so vital and so pressing.

When her brood is young, the mother will risk herself perilously to save her babies. Upon being surprised by an enemy, she will resort to the customary pitiful pretense of being wounded. Her chicks meanwhile vanish into hiding. If very young, they are not larger than quail—delicate, eerie little creatures, whose survival amid the gross jungles in which they are reared seems remarkable. The mother will craftily time her crippled performance with the “get-away” of her brood. However tiny they be, the young will remain hidden until the mother calls. This may mean a wait of half an hour or more. How marvellous is such obedience! How many so-called well-disciplined children could perform the same feat? It seems more than instinct: it means character. When the old hen does call them forth, delicate stirrings and flute-like pipings will be heard as the little ones hurry through the “fairy forests of grass.” Their little piping calls when the mother is gathering

them after an adventure with danger are one of the sweetest sounds in nature.

The young are hardy, but during their first two weeks of life wet weather is very bad for them. If they get in a bedraggled condition while trying to follow their mother through long, wet grasses, they succumb. A wild hen that is rearing her first brood is likely to lead her chicks much faster than is good for them, whereas an old hen uses more sense and skill. Such a family, consisting of from six to twenty birds, will remain together until the breeding season of the following year. The old males are usually solitaires, or else they travel in pairs, but I have counted nine mature males together at one time; at another, eight; and at another, ten.

I have said that the young wild turkey is hardy. Knowing this, many people have attempted to raise wild turkeys either by setting the eggs or by capturing or confining the young. This plan seldom succeeds. It has been done, and it can again be done; but conditions attending it must be just right. Who raises a wild turkey is exceedingly lucky. Any coddling, petting, or artificial attention of any kind, particularly any handling, appears fatal to the wild nature. Sometimes, "by a wise and salutary neglect, generous Nature can take her own way to perfection," and a young of this bird can be reared. Then, added to a tame flock, he may prove of inestimable value in rendering the strain hardy, thrifty, and prolific.

While man remains the wild turkey's chief enemy, nature has seen fit to set several formidable predatory

creatures against this noble bird. Undoubtedly the most destructive is the fox, which eats the eggs and the young. Very seldom indeed will a fox catch an old turkey unless it be a mother defending her brood. One of the first lessons that the young of this bird is taught is how to roost off the ground; and while still mere fledglings they go to roost in low bushes. The height at which they roost is an index of their age; they roost as high as they can fly. Wildcats take toll of turkey flocks; and occasionally the golden eagle will capture a bird. Mr. F. B. Matthews, of St. Andrew's Parish, South Carolina, came upon a great golden eagle that had killed a wild gobbler and was eating it. I know not if the wild turkey suffers from snake-bite; but at sight of a large snake—too large, presumably, for the turkey to swallow—the bird will show extreme excitement. If a flock be present, a slow dance will be begun about the reptile, the birds lowering their wings, raising and spreading their tails, and making a continuous querulous calling. Single birds will detach themselves from the revolving circle to make frantic dashes at the snake. This dervish-like performance will continue for an hour or more. If the snake is not too formidable he will likely be killed; but a serpent of the proportions of a great diamond-back rattler will be left unmolested. I once witnessed this strange snake-dance in the mountains of southern Pennsylvania. From the top of a hanging ravine I looked down through the mist of dawn and counted the turkeys. There were twenty-six in number. They continued their antics

about the snake for a full half-hour, when they broke up the dance and began foraging. The snake was a king snake and a large one. The turkeys probably left him dazed and deafened, but otherwise he was unharmed.

It is generally believed by woodsmen that the wild turkey's sense of hearing is abnormally developed. Certainly it stands him in good stead. The ear of the bird is large, and its opening is curiously exposed, so that the slightest sound waves are recorded. Indeed, it is my belief that the wild turkey owes his survival to his power of hearing. His eyesight, while keen and far-reaching, is defective, as so much wild eyesight is defective: it is alert to a moving object, but it does not readily apprehend the identity of an object at rest. For this reason, if a man sits still in the woods, a wild turkey will walk up to him. If, however, at a distance of a hundred yards he makes the slightest movement, the bird will at once discover a source of danger. Whether the turkey's power of smelling is highly developed, we have no way of knowing; but it is entirely unlikely; for if a bird like the condor, a scavenger, has little or no power of smelling, why should a game bird have it?

Turkeys are very fond of old logging roads—indeed, of any wood-roads. This is especially true when the woods are wet. On a misty November day I was sitting beside a road that was the only highway between two valleys. It crossed a high ridge, and I was near its crest. In hauling their grain over this road the farmers had spilled a little

wheat and corn, and I had discovered that wild turkeys were coming out of the woods for the grain. As I sat beside a chestnut stump, there entered the road, two hundred yards above me, two splendid gobblers. They looked unnaturally large in the mist. Slowly they came down the road, pecking at the spilled grain. Their heavy breasts literally wobbled as they walked, and their beards stabbed the sandy ground. They came within twenty paces before they sensed the presence of danger. Then they rose, beat their way mightily over the trees, and sailed a mile to another ridge.

I was walking down a trout stream one October afternoon. The sun was low. On either side the calmia and rhododendron bushes so overhung the water that further progress was a problem. I had about given it up, and was stepping from a stone to the shore, when my eyesight was arrested by an unnatural sheen coming from some object thirty yards downstream. Crouching on the rocks, I peered through the screen of laurels. There, lining either side of the stream, and taking their sundown drink, were thirty-two wild turkeys. I could count them readily. They drank in peace and departed in peace, for I never showed myself. One such wild-life sight as that is worth many a day of effort to attain it. Such a sight can be remembered with pleasure long after things apparently more important have been forgotten.

There is one other memory of this splendid bird that I should like to record. I am on a lonely road

between two Carolina plantations. On one hand lie abandoned ricefields; on the other, an ancient swamp—misty, haunted, mouldering in silence. Beyond its gloomy borders I can see, standing against the red sky of sunset, majestic pines that mark the beginning of the great coastal pine forest. I pause for a moment to look across the ricefields, where the wild ducks are coming in to spend the night. Then I look toward the swamp and toward the red sky beyond. At that moment out of the pinewood a great bird rises. He is winging his lordly way toward me. In a giant water-oak that lifts its massive crown of autumnal leaves above the mists of the swamp, the gobbler alights. I can distinguish his shape against the brilliant sky. He ruffles his feathers, moves awkwardly on his perch, and then settles down. I watch him almost as long as there is light; then I turn homeward through the darkening woods.

XXIII

WILD MOTHERS

IT HAS long been conceded that the human heart, wherever found and in whatever time, possesses qualities common to the race; that love and hatred, anger and fear, are eternal things. They are. But their realm extends itself beyond mortal confines; they are not merely human but universal. They are elements of life, not of man only. This persuasion has been borne in upon me during many years of close observing of the wild hearts of nature; the creatures that are harried and hunted; the dwellers in the wilderness and the wastelands. Particularly have I been impressed by the behaviour of certain of these wild mothers.

One day in late spring I was out in the lonely pine-lands not far from the mouth of the Santee River; and for some time I had been sitting with my back against the bole of a giant short-leaf pine. Before me, almost as far as the eye could reach, there extended a virgin forest, under-bedded with a lush growth of magic-looking ferns, green gallberries, and waving broom-sedge. Suddenly through this undergrowth I saw a lithe form approaching. It was a doe, and she was hastening in my direction. Having

been familiar with deer all my life, I was not surprised to see the behaviour of this wild mother.

Some forty yards from me she came to a halt in a patch of blossomed huckleberry. There she stood in happy patience while the eager fawn took his supper from her. I knew that the fawn had waited long, and that the mother had wandered far in search of the proper food. For it is the habit of the white-tail mother to leave her fawn in a bed and to range the woods for miles, returning at stated intervals. During her absence, if the fawn be found, it can usually be readily caught. At least I have thus caught several without difficulty. I am sure that the delicate little creature has had due admonitions from its mother not to leave the place where she left it; and as a result of its obedience it is readily captured. Than this beautiful child of the wilderness, with its liquid black eyes, its starry spots, its tiny tinted hoofs, and its frailty manifested by its gently swaying on its slender legs—than this elfin creature of the wastelands I know nothing more appealing, more poetic, more calculated to impress with the charm of its perfect grace a sensitive and reflective mind.

When the fawn in question had finished his meal, both he and the mother lay down. I then approached them quietly, not trying to stalk and frighten them, but merely moving in their direction. I came within twenty yards; then the doe sprang up. She took one giant leap; but she took no more. She then turned and faced me, and I heard her bleat

faintly to her little one. The fawn stood up; but he did not know man. Therefore he had no fear of me. He followed the mother unsteadily. As I stepped forward, the doe retreated reluctantly through the woods. I noticed a most strikingly peculiar thing about her. Whenever she leaped, she leaped with her head turned back. It was mother love that turned it. I now overtook the fawn; and it appeared in no wise frightened. I stood beside it and stroked it. It quivered with that sensitiveness that all intensely wild creatures have; but it did not try to get away. Meanwhile the mother had gone perhaps sixty yards farther. She now stood under a group of great pines. Her head was high, her ears were forward, and she was watching every one of my movements in timorous keenness. But she did not approach me. Was her fear of me greater than her love for her own? Could love of life be stronger than maternal affection?

It seems that we cannot here compare the love of a human mother, who would have rushed to the rescue of her child, with the love of this wild mother. I hardly think the love is much less. But it is a love surrounded by fear, haunted by fear, trained in a savage school wherein fear is master. The scent of man and his presence is, to practically every wild creature, the most sure and dreadful evidence that sudden death is fast approaching. For thousands of years, we may say, the deer has been one of the principal quarries of humankind. No human mother is the quarry of any inexorably greater and more sagacious

power; therefore her love develops without fear. But it is not so in nature; for nature is truly "red in tooth and claw."

As far as my observation extends, nearly every wild creature will desert its young on the approach of man. It will, of course, make pitiable attempts to divert his attention, to pretend to be wounded, and otherwise to show that it realizes the meaning and attempts to meet the danger. But in the crucial moment the encounter ends in the recognition of man's ascendancy. Of course, there will be individual animals which will stand their ground; and I think this especially true of the family of the great cats. But with most wild life it is otherwise. I believe domestic animals defend their young more fiercely than the truly wild. However, on a desolate sea island I have known a wild cow to protect her twin calves with so much initiative and pertinacity that three of her would-be capturers spent the night in a cedar tree. Any wild mother which has in her a latent ferocity may make a sudden and savage attack. But when she knows the nature of man, she is far more likely to retreat reluctantly. And we shall be obliged to say that this is due not to her cowardice but to man's reputation.

The broom-grass field was on the north end of the deserted plantation; and I had found it a famous place for quail. Here, one day in late February, I walked up an old mother fox. After one or two frightened high jumps she stopped, gave me a look, and then slunk away into the tall grass, fading away

into its colour and into its shelter. I then set about finding her den. This was not a difficult matter to do. I merely circled the field, which on all sides was bordered by woods, wherein were old fallen trees and much brush. I discovered a runway leading down into a little dell; and where this crossed a strip of damp sand I found many wild creatures' tracks. But the fox's tracks prevailed. Following these, I came to a huge uprooted pine, which had been thrown by a hurricane some two years before.

The roots were heaved high, and from these the earth which had been torn out of the ground was not yet washed away. The tree had been laid north-west; therefore the heaved roots gave a sunny shelter. Far beneath them the foxes had burrowed. Here they had their home. I smelled them. I found fox fur on a ragged jutting root. I saw tracks innumerable. And here it was, a little after the discovery of this den, that I had an opportunity to watch the family circle. It was toward the end of March, on one of those windless warm days at the close of the Southern winter, when the bursting sprays of fragrant jasmine drape almost every bush and low tree, that I repaired to the foxes' home. There stood a small live-oak near the place; and a convenient low crotch in this gave me a good seat; and from it I had a clear view of the old hurricane-laid tree. For a time I saw nothing save two black fox-squirrels eating the buds from a maple. But at last there was a movement near the mouth of the den. Then, with great rapidity three young foxes tumbled forth,

frolicsomely. They literally rolled out of the mouth of the hole and into the warm sunshine. They were like three little kittens at play. They cuffed each other, wrestled in elfin sort, and lay in assumed exhaustion on the warm sunny sand. But for all their playfulness they were alert. Usually two of them only would be tusselling at a time; the other one would keep watch or appeared to be a sentinel. Straight up on his haunches, with his bushy tail curled about his left haunch, his head held high, his nose twitching, his ears up and forward, the very picture of infant vigilance he would sit, while his brother and sister romped at his feet. There was a great deal of friendly snarling and harmless snapping; and if we may judge of emotions by expression "registered" on faces, I am sure that these little wild hearts were capable of great range and complexity of feeling. Nothing made this fact more evident than their behaviour on the return of their mother. When first she appeared, stealing silently through the huckleberry bushes, they were alarmed.

At once the three tiny fellows dashed precipitously into the hole; and as all of them "made" it at the same moment, there was something of a scrimmage, or what football players call "rough stuff." But they had no sooner squeezed in than they turned about abruptly, their curiosity getting the better of their fear. Three little heads filled the hole; three vividly bright and intelligent faces—beautiful, I called them. They had in them so much of that extraordinary vivacity that seems to belong to wild life, and most

especially to hunted wild life. Their expressions were quizzical, expectant, drolly quaint and appealing.

The mother passed out of the bushes, slunk down the slope, and must have growled gently, for the cubs made way suddenly. One of them, however, bobbed in the way again, whereupon the mother, for all the world like a tired, overworn human counterpart, turned on her child in nervous anger and cuffed him. I took it that she had returned from a foraging expedition which had not been successful; and she had the same natural disappointment that a human parent under the same circumstances would have had.

This interesting family I did not molest; but my kindness was ill repaid, for the enterprising youngsters soon matured; and then they became the greatest poachers you ever saw. It seems that all one of them needed to enable him to catch a chicken was to have the fowl's address. By human standards they might be considered quite incorrigible children; but I must not condemn them. I think of that old verse from the Bible about the young lions roaring after their prey, seeking their meat from God. Wild creatures must live; in a sense all living things are predatory. And for my part I consider that foxes are not unworthy of our admiration and esteem.

An ancient enmity exists between the fox and the wild turkey. I have long known of this feud, and I have studied the results of it. I know why the old mother wild turkey teaches her young to fly into low

bushes almost before they have more than the beginnings of wings. I remember coming upon such a family at dusk one evening on the glimmering borders of an old Negro burying ground. This was in late May and, of course, the foliage on trees, vines, and bushes was very dense.

But under the wild and riotous thick canopy on the margin of the thicket which I describe, there were certain low bare limbs, which had died because of lack of light. Everyone knows how the first limbs on a scarlet oak become a dead tangle of dry wood; so do the lower limbs of nearly all trees that are smothered. And so it was here. There were several sweet-gums, whose leaves are the most fragrant of any I know after myrtle, which had two or three tiers of dry limbs close to the ground. As I approached the place I heard a quaint and sweet piping, complaining in childish fashion. Effacing myself behind the wall of bushes that topped an old ditchbank, I crawled up to the place. My first idea was that a covey of young quail had been scattered. But as I listened I knew the family to be wild turkeys. The piping continued; then I heard the voice of the old mother. She was explaining the situation to her little ones. I edged a few inches nearer until I could see under the gum trees. The brood was some thirty feet away and clearly discernible in the light that sadly gleamed in the lonely placid vale under the trees. The old mother and two young were on the ground. The rest of the brood had taken roost; but some of them were within three feet of the

ground; and one very small turkey was on the top of a bush not more than eighteen inches high.

Those who had been made by their wise parent to take the trees were very unsteady on their perches. They peered down questioningly. They complained in sweet pipings. They swayed back and forth, trying to steady themselves; and once a youngster fluttered to the ground. But the old mother was as patient as she was wise. She must, I knew, have gone on a low roost first; for only thus could she teach her young to roost properly; then she must have come down again to herd in the frail and the helpless. As I watched her, she admonished these; then, to quiet them, she raked vigorously once or twice in the pinestraw on the ground, disclosing delectable little dainties for her sleepy babies. Then she peered upward, and in a moment had flown on a low limb. From this she looked down, giving a low call. One of the three on the ground returned to his low bush. The other two, by heroic effort, managed to reach the mother. One alighted on either side of her. Farther away on the same limb were three other children. But they must have felt too teetery to try to come under the mother's wings. They edged toward her somewhat, but they could not go all the way. Then followed what has always been to me one of the most beautiful sights in wild life that I have ever seen.

In the fast-fading twilight the forms of the turkeys were melting, but I strained my eyes to see clearly. I saw the wild mother extend either wing

as far as it could reach; and under it her little ones found shelter. She did not merely raise them; she stretched them full length so that her brooding love could give refuge to her children. As I looked, I thought: Here is a wild heart of the wastelands, brimming with mother love. Darkness and all the perils of the night are coming upon her and her children. She tries to get them out of the range of the danger that would surely reach them on the ground. She does not rest until the last one has been persuaded to try his little wings. Then she tries to cover them. Her great wings are the arms of love thrown wide for a shield and shelter. O mighty love! Where is thy dwelling place? It is wherever the heart of life beats, in whatever breast. O brooding love! Beneath us are thine everlasting arms; and over us are thy cloistering wings! . . . I know not if my nature be supersensitive; but I know that after that scene of the wild turkey stretching abroad her wings to give sanctuary to her little ones, the whole of life has taken a somewhat different aspect. I then sensed the universal law of love; the spirit that, in mating-time, is the most powerful of all instincts, and in motherhood is the crown and glory of all affection.

This observation I made on the west bank of the Santee River, at a place called Romney Graveyard, some ten miles from the mouth of the river.

The last mother I shall describe is not considered beautiful; yet behaviour has something to do with pure beauty. I should like to describe how a mother

alligator shelters her young from the sandy bed where they are hatched down to the edge of the water, in which they are safer than on the land.

This nest I had found near the Wambaw Reserve; in the region just mentioned. It was discovered through following the "crawl" of the old mother—a huge saurian not less than fifteen feet long. She had left the lagoon, had crawled through a strip of woodland some fifty yards wide, and had then come to an old sandy mound that well-diggers had left there many years before. In a shallow hole in this she laid her eggs; they had been covered with loose trash and leaves and some small brush. She had then returned to the water.

How long after she laid her eggs I discovered them I cannot say; but I did not disturb the nest, determining to try to observe the young when they came forth. This I was fortunate enough to do, and the experience was a good deal more exciting than I had expected it would be.

I had been going to the nest regularly every day for a period of eight days, and at last I found that the little ones had come forth. But when I discovered that the nest was empty of both eggs and young, I was afraid that all the little fellows had eluded me and were already in the water. I started toward the lagoon; but on the borders of the dim woodland margining it, I halted. There was the old mother; and between her and the water her young were making a valiant attempt to get away. The whole floor of the woodland rustled; and I could see

small tails tipped in the air as the tiny reptiles crawled over obstacles. When the old mother saw me she turned, raised herself most clumsily on all-fours, seemed to distend her body, and almost at once sank back to the ground, suspiring a vast sigh of warning. It was her way of saying that I had better leave her children alone.

But soon she turned to follow them, and perhaps this was because I edged around her and came down to where the thirty-five or forty young were having their cross-country race. The mother crawled after me; but it was easy to keep clear of her. However, I did get a shock when I came almost to the water, for on the brink, and lying almost invisible, or at least hardly distinguishable from the many old sodden logs, there lay the old male. He was watching intently the coming procession. I got a good look at his features, and while I confess that, for a fond parent's they were singularly phlegmatic, I am sure that he took a genuine interest in his offspring. There is a horrible belief among some naturalists that the bull and the mother of this species fight over their young just as they enter the water—the mother to keep them alive and the bull to devour them. But I never saw such an encounter. I saw many of these elfin dragons crawl into the water very close to their father—it must have been he—yet he made no hostile move. He viewed the scene idly, with lambent eyes; and when he discerned me clearly, he withdrew in silence; leaving not a ripple on the lagoon's placid waters.

Gaily, with all the joyous intrepidity of children, the little 'gators thronged into the waters. Behind, with much shambling, and with the heavy effort of crawling over rough land, came the savage and proud old mother. I do not love reptiles; but I confess that I admired this one.

There is one question about this last scene that I have not been able to answer: how did the mother know when her brood would hatch? She must have kept vigil; the father, too, apparently knew, or judged from the mother's leaving the water that the young had come. How she knew—how they knew—I cannot say; but it is apparent that they did. And if it is incongruous, yet there is something appealing in this thought, the thought that this old monster of the waste waters should take up love's watch, and should be faithful in the keeping of it.

Such are some of the wild mothers and their ways. Obscurely, perhaps, and faintly, that magic of immortal love that we know comes also to them; at least I am sure that they manifest it when their mother hearts display their beauteous depths.

XXIV

TAMPERING WITH KINGLY CROWNS

DURING the past eight or ten years this business of tampering with kingly crowns has been exceedingly popular, and interest in the sport has been worldwide. I should like briefly to describe a variety of this recreation with which I am somewhat familiar; and it is more innocent than that of assailing the headpiece of a mortal monarch. In brief, I think it can be established that the growth of deer-antlers can be made subject to man's control. My discovery of this has been somewhat curious; and while the truth of it may not yet be established, I hope it may seem interesting and plausible.

During nearly thirty-five years of deer-hunting and of roaming deer-haunts, I have never been impressed with anything more than the fact that in certain localities the stags seem to wear bigger horns than they do in other places, even though the latter may be quite near—say, within twenty or thirty miles. I know two small private preserves—not parks, but estates of two or three thousand acres, and in desperately wild country—where the stags grow antlers that are unbelievably large. So well is this curious fact known by sportsmen of the vicinity—

near Charleston, South Carolina—that whenever a phenomenal head is seen at a taxidermist's or elsewhere, someone always says: "Oh, that must be from the Millbrook Place or from the Oakland Club. The deer there always have better horns than they can grow elsewhere." And to show what is meant by "better," I may say that many of these heads have a spread of from twenty-two to twenty-four inches, a beam-circumference of from five to six inches, and carry from twelve to eighteen points. But it is the general appearance rather than any special feature which really impresses: the burly, rugged, craggy, massive aspect of these splendid antlers.

Once or twice I hunted where these great deer are found; and one feature of the landscape impressed me constantly. It is the so-called dredge cuts. This country lies close to the sea; and it is here that valuable mineral deposits in the form of phosphate rock are found. These workings have been going on for nearly a century, and as a result much of the forest, destroyed by the first workings, has now returned; but the whole region is deeply and strangely serrated by these profound dredge cuts, deep and wide ditches, now half filled with water, canals now a permanent feature of the forest. The deer in this kind of country love nothing better than to feed on the lush grasses that fringe these cuts, and they drink from these old canals. I had often wondered if they did not assimilate an unusual amount of lime into their systems by feeding and drinking where this marl rock had been mined, and where much of it that

was not removed by the dredges remained exposed to various forms of erosion. That deer do thus assimilate lime I now believe there can be no doubt; and that its absorption affects the growth of their horns is, of course, a natural and easy assumption.

But while I was thinking over this business, I had a talk with a friend who had lately come from England, where he had been privileged to inspect a certain duke's deer preserve.

"The duke," he said, "has been experimenting with the horns of his red deer; and he has already produced antlers larger than any ever seen in the Kingdom. His keepers feed the stags turnips sprinkled with slaked lime. As you know, a deer, being of the goat family, will eat almost anything; and these deer take famously to lime, which acts directly on their antlers."

As lime is one of the chief constituents of horn and of bone, this theory seems altogether likely to prove true; and I believe I have found why the deer of a certain place are likely to have so much finer antlers than the stags of some other neighbourhood. Have they not access to some alkali springs or some other source of lime? This belief may prove also why a buck of inferior proportions may sometimes wear a statelier crown than one a monster in size.

Hereafter, upon encountering a stag, the proper question to ask will be, not "Have you had your iron to-day?" or "Have you had your vitamins to-day?" but rather, "Old scout, what about that lime? Have you been taking it regularly?"

This business I do not assert as gospel truth. I honestly just wouldn't swear to it. But I'd risk about a thousand berries off next week's salary bush that there's something in it. Nor, even if it's true, do I think this tampering can very easily be practised on wild stags of an unlimited range. Yet perhaps it wouldn't be harder to put lime on one's tongue than salt on one's tail; easier, by a mile. A buck has to get a certain amount of lime to grow any horns at all; and if he has access to a good supply, he'll not be bashful. He seldom is except when he is dodging bullets.

XXV

WILD LIFE ON BULL'S ISLAND

DURING the entire afternoon, though the northeast wind over the salt marshes had been keen and cold, I had kept to the deck of the little steamer; for the region through which we were passing is one of the most picturesque and romantic in America. Our route lay between those famous barrier islands of the Carolina seaboard and the vast sea marshes which extend between the islands and the mainland shore. Through tortuous creeks we steamed slowly, breasting a strong head tide. On my right was the long, low wooded reach known as Long Island, the northern extension of Sullivan's Island, the scene of Poe's "The Gold Bug." This chain of islands extends for more than a hundred miles up and down the coast. They are separated by tidal inlets; sometimes narrow, extending themselves into the marshes as creeks, sometimes widening into bays and sounds. Always between the islands these inlets are deep and treacherous; and on them all kinds of craft must be handled with wary skill. Storms change the contour of many of these islands, but it has been observed that an island of this type, however small, seldom washes away.

Compensation appears always to be taking place. For example, the north end of Bull's Island has washed away to such a degree that the old lighthouse, which once stood on the edge of the woods, far above the breaker line, now has apparently walked weirdly into the raging surf. At least, there it curiously stands. But the south end of the island is being built up rather rapidly. Bull's Island is the last of this immediate chain; it is more than thirty miles northeast from Charleston. Beyond it extends, vast and restless, the famous Bull's Bay, celebrated for its storms, its dangerous waters, and its delicious oysters.

It was to Bull's Island that I was bound, to observe the wild life there. This is one of the finest places in the country to study the lives of game birds and animals. Many years ago it was purchased by two gentlemen from the North, who have carefully protected it ever since. The results of their wise and humane experiment I shall try to set forth clearly.

The island itself is fully nine miles long, and its width varies from a few hundred yards to nearly three miles. It has a wide tidal creek winding up through a long and lonely region of it; and this creek is bordered by great stretches of salt marsh. Its entire eastern front is beaten upon by the Atlantic. Its entire western shore-line is lipped by a warm creek, languid and wan compared with the hale and epic tumult of the front beach with the ever-raging surf. Its northern limit is Bull's Inlet; its southern, Caper's Inlet. The mainland is far across the salt

creeks and marshes, fully four miles; but the going is so difficult that the effect of the distance is heightened. It takes a boatman six or seven hours to row from the island to the mainland; and it is a fact that, while deer often pass from other islands closer to the mainland to the mainland itself, seldom or never does a Bull's Island deer leave its home, unless it is to cross the inlet to the southward.

Ere on our journey we had reached this southern tip of the island I had gone below to try to get warm. In the cramped hold was a little cracked wood stove, the red flames glaring and licking through every ancient crevice. On one side of it was a huge drum of gasoline; on the other there was a ten-gallon can of kerosene. These, as you can imagine, I eyed appraisingly. Their proximity to the fire was, to say the least, interesting. On the floor about the stove were conveniently littered many splinters of resinous pine, which were even now oozing their sap because of the heat of the fire. I thought I had never seen a better arrangement for an explosion; and I made mental reservations that if ever I wanted to blow up a ship so that no one would ever be able to discover of her even a spot of oil on the water, I should imitate the layout that I here observed. Yet how quickly we become used to things! Grateful was the warmth; I ceased to be concerned, and after awhile I forgot all about the fact that I was sitting on the lip of a volcano.

My reveries on many things were interrupted by a violent reversing of the engine; the engineer's bell

sounded several times importunately; I heard our little craft bump lustily against some heavy object. Either we were in a collision or else we had arrived.

The hatchway was jerked back, a black head was thrust in.

"Cap'n," a respectful voice said, "we is to de island."

Swinging myself up the ladder, I once more stood on deck. We were ringed by stars, tremulous and large and blazing; we were caressed by sea winds, warm and delicate and spicy here in the lee of the island; the distant surge and thunder of the surf came to me; far off I heard the plaintive fluting of yellowleg plover; mysterious voices of loneliness and of the night thronged to me from the whispering marshes and the brimming tide. The world was one of sea-winds and sea-stars, of sea-music and of sea-silences. Its was as if the mystery of life and of love had suddenly in beauty been revealed. I thought of Milton's—

A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory
Of calling shapes and beckoning shadows dire;
Of airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.

A few minutes after we had landed, accompanied by my host, the manager of the estate, I walked up through the starlit woods of the island to the bungalow, which is strategically placed near the centre of the island. The site is well sheltered from storms. Anciently, from Revolutionary times and even be-

fore them, the owners of the island had lived at this place. But the present house is modern. The manager told me that lately he had picked up in the sandy yard a penny of George II. I suggested Kidd and treasure; but he was inclined to believe that the island had been used many times by the British as a landing-place. It was so used in the Civil War, and at the north end of the island there are the remains of a fort of considerable size. The walls of this fort, now standing from a foot to two feet above the ground, were built of that singularly weather-resisting material, a mixture of lime, broken oyster shells, and cement. It appears to me to be superior to a good deal of the modern concrete work.

As we walked up the dark road, a-glimmer here and there because of the white sand of its track, I was aware of a whispering from the thickety borders of our pathway. This rustling I soon found to be the sere talk of the dead fronds of palmettos. I suppose there is nothing which is more grievously responsive to a movement of air than these same withered broad fronds, with all their frayed brown edges sighing, tapping one another, and "uttering unutterable things." Four times, however, on our half-mile walk up to the bungalow we started deer in the eerie darkness, and they fled airily, delicately, vanishingly at our approach. I knew of course that the creatures we started were deer because of the dainty, concise thudding of their hoofs and because of the tall flag tail, ghostly in the night. I may say that there are not only a very great many deer on the island, but

that until lately there was a small herd of pure albinos. There now remains one, possibly two. A pair were taken for museum purposes several years ago, and these interesting specimens may now be seen in the American Museum of Natural History.

Reaching the bungalow, we were greeted by an open fire of dry pine. Unlike many an island, this one furnishes the greatest abundance of firewood; so much, in fact, that driftwood need never be used. Pine is plentiful, and live-oak; and there are long stretches of red cedar, myrtle, water-oak, and palmetto. This last is one of the most singular of woods, being little more than a stalwart column of fibres and sinews woven together with a marvellous compactness and strength. Until late at night the manager and I talked. He told me of the wild turkey experiment on the island. Some eight years ago, from a woodsman on the mainland, some wild turkey eggs were bought. These were hatched, and the young thrived. Indeed, I have never seen a more ideal place for the propagation of wild turkeys. Here on Bull's Island they have original growth woodlands through which they may roam; they have plenty of fresh water in the many ponds on the estate; the fox, their ancient arch-enemy, is not found; they have dense jungles of palmetto, cassine, and myrtle, where they may nest; they can live weeks and months utterly unmolested; they have sunny washing places in the warm sand; and at all seasons they have abundant food. One thing proves the truth of these many claims: the island is full of turkeys. The

proper establishment of them and wise protection have brought back to this lonely sanctuary, in numbers as abundant as in colonial days, this most magnificent of all game birds. How abundant they were, say, in 1768 may be judged from Bartram's "Travels." He declares that in the pine forests near Savannah the wild turkeys every morning broke his rest "with their incessant clamour, gobbling for hundreds of miles around." And even as late as 1880 a wild gobbler out of the Virginia woods could be bought on the streets of Washington for a quarter. One sale of five cents is authentically recorded! Nowadays a wild gobbler, if it could be sold, would readily bring as much as a quart of old rye—if it could be sold.

When I retired that night, it was to the sound of sea winds through myrtles and palmettos, to the far human whistling of the yellowleg plover, and to the soft thunder of the distant surf. It was also to the thought that we were to be up long before daybreak, so that we might have breakfast and be down at the ponds before the morning flight of wild fowl would begin.

Certain pearly streaks amid the eastern clouds were all the signs we had of coming day as we trudged down the grassy road toward the duck ponds. Over us hung great live-oaks, oppressive in their majesty. On one hand there was the densest of canebrakes, in which I twice heard deer move. One doe walked timidly, mincingly across the misty road before us. On the other hand there was an open

stretch of country which the manager told me, with some misgiving in his voice, was his farm. "Experiment station would be a better description," he said; "for by the time the deer and the wild hogs and the wild cattle get through with my crops there's hardly anything left but the signs of an experiment. Yes; it is very difficult to raise anything when the main object of a property is to raise wild life."

About a mile from the bungalow we swung off to the left, following an old trail through the myrtle jungle. Then the jungle broke away and we came to a long, wide arena starred here and there by placid dim ponds and ringed about by the moss-draped, dewy, listening woods. Between the ponds and the woods were small meandering streams that wound through grassy meadows, and both streams and ponds were bordered by marshes and reeds and rank grasses. On this particular morning, though there was no frost, the grasses were stiffened with a delicate rime. My companion left me in a blind at one of the ponds and he went forward to another, half a mile distant. While I was there chiefly to observe, we were to shoot a few choice ducks for dinner.

I sat down in the blind, which was nothing but a natural growth of cedar and scrub live-oak jutting out toward the pond. Grayly, then rosily, the day came. It was a silent morning, and only fitful sea airs stirred the dark tresses of the pines and the pale pendulous mosses. As the light became stronger, the forest edges surrounding me, which at first had merely glimmered vaguely in the distance, began to

take distinct yet soft outlines. It was the most beautiful of all forests—that of a semi-tropical island. Lacking the grandeur of primeval timber growths on the mainland, it had nevertheless a romance, a haunting charm, a poignant beauty. These forest brinks seemed to me marginal to all the wonder in the world; and their appeal had about it something sad, something heartbreaking, like the glamour of eternal beauty. Whatever storms come, whatever winter befalls, this mystic sanctuary, walled about by the deepest and densest island woods, remains constant in its peace, its solitude, its loveliness. It seemed a country for fairies and for fays. However, I was soon to be reminded that it was a country for wild fowl.

Over the tops of the tall pines, in the clear morning heavens, coming apparently from nowhere but following, as I knew, a regular line of flight, a flock of green-winged teal came hurrying. If there is a swifter duck than the teal, I have never seen it. And the teal not only hurries but does so intently. Usually this intentness appears to be the result of some call to a far-distant place; but these particular visitors were intent upon alighting in the pond immediately before me. After one has long been familiar with ducks that fly high, craning their necks to discern hidden gunners, and that circle a half-dozen times and then do not alight, it was a pleasure to have these beautiful little confiding ducks come straight to me, as it were, and settle, after a manœuvre as swift as light, with an elfin grace upon the

dark waters of the lonely pond. These were soon followed by a pair of mallards, looking larger than normal in the misty light. Instead of taking the water, they alighted in the rimy grass, and then sedately, with heads raised high, they waddled heavily toward their favourite element. When these were afloat on the water, I had a wild-life picture before me worth coming far to see. Though not usually acknowledged as such, the mallard drake is one of the most gorgeous of all waterfowl, especially when he is relaxed so that his plumage shows to advantage. Indeed, in this respect all wild creatures are like all other living things—they cannot show their beauty unless they are at peace. They may show their speed or their alertness, their fear or their wariness, but not their beauty. A great wild gobbler strutting and gobbling in his native glades when the ardour of spring love is upon him is an entirely different bird from the tall, crafty, elusive, fear-shrunken skulker of the hunting season. A decided difference in character as well as in appearance is always discernible between the flirtatious and the fugitive.

My wildfowl gathering was suddenly augmented by an inrush of eight huge black ducks which had approached behind me and had drawn beautifully to the water almost before I had seen them. Upon alighting they did not drift in stately beauty like the mallards, but at once began foraging in the most material fashion. Paddling about in the warm water, they soon came to a muddy black spit, over which

they crowded greedily, running their bills along the soil in true vacuum-cleaner fashion. They were very garrulous.

And now across the glade, mistily roseate with the coming of the sunrise, I saw two shapes on the glimmering borders of the woods. They were deer—two bucks; for at this season of the year, the mating period having passed, the bucks and does do not readily consort. The does usually go alone or in small groups of two or three; the bucks are nearly always paired from the close of the mating season, which in this latitude may be said to end at some time in December, to the time of the dropping of their antlers, which is usually in February. While bucks are often solitary throughout the entire year except in the breeding season, I have often observed paired bucks in the summer. A friend of mine once started from a thicketed pond five velveted bucks, and in time of a flood another friend of mine counted a herd of ten bucks.

These bucks that I now saw illustrated perfectly certain characteristics of deer nature. They were the most shadowy, evanishing, elusive creatures imaginable. I can easily conceive that when the ancients peopled the forests and the fields with nymphs and dryads, fauns and satyrs, they perhaps had had just cause for their beliefs in such creatures, for had they not seen at twilight and by moonlight eerie forms which appeared to belong to the supernatural world? These deer that I saw looked like spirits; and even though they had not, as I knew, been

molested for years by hunters, they appeared to have lost none of their dainty wariness, their delicate craft. Soon and silently the gray-green forest hid them. They melted into it.

Now to the pond, through the heavens crimson with the sunrise, came a long line of yellowlegs, fluting melodiously. They alighted on a mud-bar amid the foraging black ducks. Hooded mergansers appeared over the pines and down in my pond. And now the whole air was suddenly thronged with ducks of many kinds: mallards, widgeons, sprigs, teal, wood-ducks, and black English. It was a pure delight to watch these beautiful wild things come trustingly to this solitary place. Ere long there were more than a hundred ducks of various kinds on the water before me. Long shafts of sunlight, striking across the foaming breakers and through the dim forest aisles, tinged and tinted the scene. Softly but brightly the dew-jewelled woodland gleamed. The rimmed grasses steamed airily. It was an idyllic scene. But the children of nature are seldom long at their ease.

In less time than I can tell it my pond was empty. The dark, dancing waters were all that remained, while in almost every direction fled frantically the wildfowl. An ancient enemy had appeared. He came sailing in scornful splendour toward me. It was a male bald eagle, one of a pair which had since my boyhood nested on this island. The bird was probably older than I. He was indolently lordly. He disdained to pursue. The power and majesty of

his flight were very impressive; in the pure sky he looked like the black symbol of wild Nature's eternal menace.

After the dispersal of the very pleasant company that had been mine, I knew that the morning flight of wildfowl was practically over. I therefore rejoined my companion, and together we repaired to the bungalow, sunning itself amid its live-oaks, drowsy giants that placidly watched our approach. An hour thereafter I sallied forth alone to spend the remainder of the day studying the deer and the other forms of wild life on the island.

Lest my account become too minute, I shall give the observations I was able to make, and not be too specific as to the exact circumstances attending each observation. My course took me across wastelands of reeds and marsh, retiring warmly into the ancient forest; down roads of unimaginable beauty and peace, mile after mile winding through primeval woodlands; out on the lonely beach. Everywhere was evidence of abundant wild life. I flushed three flocks of wild turkeys, and wherever in the road there was a litter of pine straw and leaves this would be seen to be torn up by the busy scratching of the big birds. In the marshlands there were endless paths, winding interminably. These were used by the deer, the wild hogs, and the wild cattle. During a part of one day I counted upward of forty deer, and on the island there can hardly be fewer than four hundred. Probably two years ago there were many more; but a visitation of the deer's only plague—anthrax—

sadly diminished the number. The coming of this disease was followed by a dreadful outbreak of cholera among the hogs, so that everywhere, the manager of the estate told me, were dead deer and dead swine. I think it interesting to use this matter as a probable proof that the germs of these and of similar diseases are carried by vultures. At the time mentioned there was cholera on the mainland, and there was some black-tongue also. Since both the black vulture and the turkey buzzard pass frequently from the mainland to the island, and since no other creatures do, the proof appears clear that these scavengers are the carriers of disease. Our Department of Agriculture now admits, I believe, the probable truth of this important theory.

The deer of the island have very interesting habits. Throughout the greater part of the day they retire to the deep woods, where they do less sleeping, I believe, than ruminating. The possession of several stomachs is a matter to which these and similar creatures give due consideration. They bed down in warm grass, in bunchy bushes, under palmettos, in canebrakes. A deer loves a place that is warm and sheltered and that offers a few rays of grateful sunshine stealing in upon him. Thus are the daylight hours drowsed away. When the sun is low and the long shadows begin to darken the marshes, the deer troop forth, either on the front beach, where they love to walk among the rolling dunes, or to the marshes, on whose edges they find their best feeding ground. While I started many deer in the forest, my best

view of deer was late in the afternoon, when they came forth from their deep haunts to roam the wild waste country between the woods and the surf, or between lonely reaches of forest. While walking quietly along the edge of a marsh I became thrillingly aware that a deer was looking at me from the border of the woods. It was a buck, and full-antlered. He held his head strangely high. There in the dusk he stood, not twenty yards off, haughtily, impatiently alert. I saw him toss his head petulantly. He saw me but did not understand me. In a moment more, however, he was gone into the thicket. Over the marsh I saw shadows trooping. I counted at one time fourteen of these deer. But then the night closed in. It was time for me to stop observing. Besides, I happened to be five miles from the lodge.

But during this day and the days that followed I saw more wild life than deer and wildfowl and turkeys. The island is infested by wild hogs, which appear to thrive splendidly. They are a good deal of a nuisance, for they break through all fences and root up all crops. They are, however, valuable as a check to the cotton-mouth moccasin, the only venomous snake on the barrier islands. The rattlesnake has never been seen here. The hogs have heavy toll taken from their ranks by a few alligators, which live in deep holes in the fresh-water ponds. It has but lately been discovered that these huge saurians are at home in salt water as well as in fresh, and they are not infrequently seen in the salt creeks and even in

the surf. A big bull alligator grimly riding the breakers is truly an impressive sight. There are many wild and half-wild cattle on the island. Many of these I encountered. They eyed me with sullen truculence, and their wariness, though of a clumsy sort, was almost equal to that of the deer. Once, after a long crawl through a fetid jungle darkened by myrtles and palmettos, I gratefully rose in a little green savanna, glad to be able to stand upright once more. But my relief was momentary, for thirty yards off, standing with a certain air of outraged majesty, was a magnificent bull of massive proportions and of a symmetry known only to wild things. Grouped behind him were a dozen other cattle. All of them faced me at exactly the same angle; they appeared statues of angry surprise. But all these creatures behave in the same way: what the leader does all of them do. If he advances, they come forward with him; if he turns, they wheel as if performing manœuvres. I have never had any sort of an opinion of my eyes as hypnotizers, but since that wild bull turned from me and he and all his followers fled crashingly through the jungle I have had a hope of occult power. It is a harmless and pleasing thought.

Of smaller wild animals on the island the raccoon is the most numerous; the mink is present, but is most difficult to come upon, and, as it spends much of its time travelling about the salt marshes to westward of the island, it is hardly a true resident. Here the otter has been seen; but, as this splendid fur-bearer

is essentially a wanderer, it is doubtful if he remains on this limited range. But the raccoons are absurdly abundant. In broad daylight they can be seen snoozing philosophically in the comfortable low crotches of trees, and sometimes ambling thoughtfully down the bypaths of woodland and of marsh. The wise, friendly, interesting little creature finds on this wild island a most congenial home. A range like Bull's Island can easily support a colony of more than a thousand raccoons. Always with wild life—and perhaps with all life—the primary problem is the question of food. Here the sea feeds the children of the land, for as long as a raccoon can get an oyster he is happy.

In contrast to the number of raccoons is the comparative scarcity of common birds. Wildfowl are abundant, and in the migrating seasons the shore birds come in myriads. In the summer vast colonies of herons breed in the myrtle jungles. But there are few common birds. I saw some blue jays, two mocking-birds, and a half-dozen sparrows. Yet at this time of the year on the mainland, a few miles off, the thickets are noisy with the singing and the busy scratching of thousands of brown thrashers, cardinals, juncos, whitethroats, and towhees. The wide and lonely salt marsh isolates the island; only the hawks, the eagles, the vultures, and the strong-pinioned game birds come here, and a few wanderers of the smaller species. I was pleased to flush several woodcock, which were singularly tame. So attracted are they by the peace and security of these

island woods that they sometimes remain in this situation to breed.

Such, then, are some of the aspects of the wild life upon this "beauteous lonely isle." It is a place for ever echoing with the "rolling anthem of the beach," for ever isolated, for ever charged with a certain mystery and solitary danger; the haunt of creatures essentially wild, yet living as though life held no real dangers. In observing these birds and animals I felt as Alexander Selkirk felt: "Their tameness was shocking to me."

And now that I am far from the island, it is like a dim lost glamour-land; yet its varied scenes recur vividly. I see once more the shadowy gray dunes over which pace lordly bucks and mincing does; I see long stretches of mysterious marshland over which a great eagle beats in solitary power; I see the deep-hearted peace of sunlit virgin woods; I see long ranks of red cedars, rimming the beach but apparently blasted away from it by the storming of many sea winds; and high over all the island I view certain thoughtful black pines, looming and listening—ominous strong warders keeping watch through the long years over all this beauty and all this loneliness.

THE END

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